DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 044 202 RC 004 762

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TITLE	Social Adaptation to Widowhood Among a Rural-Urban Aged Population.
INSTITUTION	Washington State Univ., Pullman. Coll. of Agriculture.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	Bull-689
PUB DATE	Dec 67
NOTE	34p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.80
DESCRIPTORS	*Economic Factors, Family Relationship, Financial Support, Friendship, Health, Low Income Groups, *Marital Status, *Older Adults, Religion, *Rural Urban Differences, Self Care Skills, Sex Differences, *Social Factors, Social Life, Welfare

ABSTRACT

In order to gain greater comprehension of the heterogeneous character of older people and to learn more about the social conditions surrounding the aged survivor, this study focuses on certain sub-samples of the older population: the married and widowed. Specifically, it attempts to assess the social adaptation to widowhood among the aged in 3 residential settings: city, small town, and "open country." The document devotes sections to (1) characteristics of the 496 respondents, (2) economic circumstances, (3) living conditions, (4) use of time, (5) social isolation, (6) friendship relations, and (7) formal social participation. The final section summarizes major findings and draws 12 conclusions and implications from them. Some basic conclusions were that widowers are more isolated and less self-sufficient than widows; that 9 out of 10 widows live on a money income of less than $2,000 per year and thus must rely on additional outside monetary assistance; and that the widow is more active in church participation than the widower. A 71-item bibliography is included. (AN)

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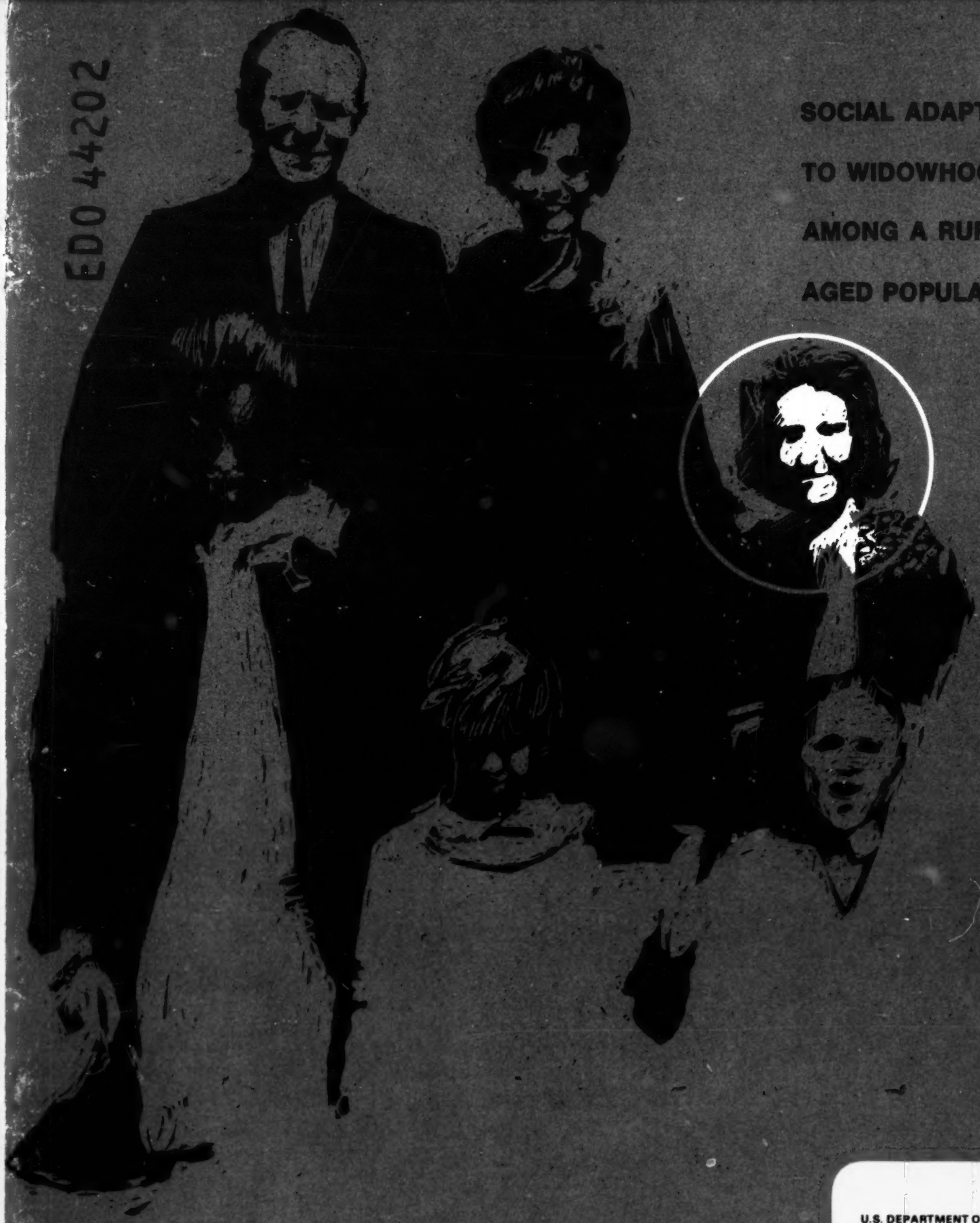

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RL004762

shington Agricultural Experiment Station College of Agriculture Washington State University Bulletin 689 December 19

ED044202

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to Walter L. Slocum, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Rural Sociology, for providing access to the original data from the Thurston County study, upon which the present analysis is based. His continuous encouragement and support throughout the project, and his many useful suggestions regarding the manuscript are most appreciated. I would also like to thank Dr. Eugene Erickson for reading and commenting on various sections of the manuscript.

A note of appreciation is also due to Leonard Hart, Stan Davis, Ardith Mathison, and Romelle Castle for their advice and assistance during the various stages of programming the data. Also to be acknowledged here are Alice Campbell, Joyce Jessee and James Aho for preparing the tabular data upon which the analysis is based. Mr. Aho worked on this project as a trainee under National Institute of Mental Health research training grant MH 08559.

Finally, thanks must be expressed to Kathleen Warila, whose efficiency as a typist and secretary has provided me with a rare sense of security.

"The story of the status of widows is one of the saddest in the history of civilization. In uncivilized society a widow is considered dangerous because the ghost of her husband is supposed to cleave to her. Under marriage by capture or purchase, she is the property of her husband; and, like his other property, ought to accompany him to the other world. When she is spared she has no rational place in the society; therefore, widows were a problem which the mores had to solve. In no other case have societies shown so much indifference to misfortune and innocent misery."

William Graham Sumner
in *Folkways,* 1906

"It was said to be an attribute of the Diety Himself that 'He is the Father of the fatherless and defendeth the cause of the widow.' To 'visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction' was to be part of the definition of true religion. One might expect to find, in a nation bred on this kind of teaching, that widows and orphans were a first charge on the good services of the community; that they were comforted, protected, cared for. One finds, in fact, that of all the innocent victims of our clumsy blundering social system, they are the most undeservedly humiliated and unnecessarily distressed."

E. F. Rathbone

SOCIAL ADAPTATION TO WIDOWHOOD AMONG A RURAL-URBAN AGED POPULATION

FELIX M. BERARDO[1]

SUMMARY

Scientific interest in the latter stages of the human life cycle has gained impressive momentum in recent decades, owing to the increased longevity among a rapidly expanding aged population. Much of this gerontological research has tended to portray the old as a rather homogeneous group. It has also ignored, by and large, the living circumstances of the increased older population.

In order to gain greater comprehension of the heterogeneous character of older people and to learn more about the social conditions surrounding the aged survivor, the present study purposely focused attention on certain sub-samples of the older population, the married and the widowed. More specifically, it has attempted to assess, in an exploratory manner and via a secondary analysis of survey data, the social adaptation to widowhood among the aged.

In this final section of the report, we shall summarize some of the major findings of this investigation, and draw some conclusions and implications from them. Throughout the analysis, comparisons were made on the basis of the marital status of the respondents. Our presentation will follow a similar procedure.

Characteristics of the Sample

Married persons were generally younger than the widowed; nearly half had not reached their seventieth birthday, compared to one-fifth of the widowers and one-fourth of the widows. Nearly two-fifths of the widowers were 80 years old or older, compared to less than a fourth of the widows.

Widows tended to reside in cities or small towns; married persons and widowers were most frequently found in the fringe-open country.

A high degree of residential stability was evident. A greater proportion of the widowed persons, particularly widowers, were longtime residents.

Respondents in general were relatively well educated; married persons had slightly more education than the widowed.

Widows were least likely to be working; nearly 90% were unemployed, compared to three-fourths of the widowers and less than half of the married group.

All but two respondents were white. Less than three-fourths of the widowers were native-born. Compared to the married and widows, a higher percentage of them were either naturalized citizens or aliens.

Health

A significant proportion of the subjects with poor health were widowers; the largest proportion of those with good health were married.

Widowers most often reported that poor health restricted their movement, both within and outside of the home.

Married couples were more apt to draw from private funds to meet their medical expenses and to have medical insurance. Nearly three times as many widows and twice as many widowers as married couples were using public assistance to meet their medical bills.

The largest proportion of subjects whose health was rated as poor resided in rural areas. Rural widowers exhibited the poorest health at all ages.

The proportion of respondents rated poor on the health index increased with age. At all lengths of widowhood, proportionately more males than females were in poor health.

A significantly larger proportion of the widowed, especially widows, were experiencing psychosomatic symptomologies.

Economic Circumstances

Six out of ten respondents were classified as having a low economic index rating. Over three-fourths of the widows perceive their economic circumstances as poor, compared to less than two-thirds of the widowers and less than half of the married.

Nearly 7 out of 10 persons had yearly incomes of under $2,000. Among widows, 88% had net incomes of less than $2,000, compared to 73% of the widowers and 56% of the married. Widows more often cited finances as a major problem than other marital groups.

The overwhelming majority indicated that they could make ends meet. Widows were most likely to report that they were unable to make ends meet or that they had just enough to get along on. Widowers were most likely to state that their current income was less nearly sufficient than it had been in the past.

Less than one-third of this sample felt that they had curtailed activities in recent years because of low income. However, two-fifths of the widows said they had been obliged to restrict activities for this reason.

Among current sources of income, the married and widowers cited Social Security most often, whereas the widows reported Old Age Assistance. Only the widowed considered Old Age Assistance a major and most important source of support. They are also more dependent upon personal savings

[1] Felix M. Berardo, Assistant Rural Sociologist, Department of Rural Sociology, Washington State University. Research reported here was completed under Project No. 1856.

and financial contributions from children.

A very small proportion felt threatened by their low income. Surprisingly, widows were least likely to feel threatened.

Small-town residents were rated lowest in economic status. City dwellers were highest economically speaking, except for rural widowers. More than twice as many of the latter were rated high on the economic index when compared to their other residential counterparts. Within each residential category, married persons got the highest economic rating.

Greater proportions of respondents were rated low on the economic status index with each increment in age. Widows were the poorest regardless of age.

Economic status improved with increases in education. However, widows were poorest and the married the best off, regardless of level of education. The poorest group, economically speaking, were widows with a grammar school education or less.

Generally speaking, the unfavorable economic status of the widow did not change with length of time since the death of her husband. Among persons widowed 10 years or more, however, the differences between the sexes tend to disappear.

Living Circumstances

About one-fourth of the widowed had a poor level of living rating.

The majority of subjects were living in single family dwellings. Nearly all of the married and over three-fourths of the widowed were in such quarters. Most of the remaining widowed were apartment dwellers. Married persons were much more likely to have their homes paid for. Widows were most likely to live in a rented apartment or duplex.

In most cases, the living quarters were big enough. Almost all of those occupying one and two room dwellings, however, were widowed and most of these resided in small hotel apartments. Well over four-fifths of all respondents were satisfied with their present housing. A similarly high proportion stated they planned to stay in their present living quarters. There was little variation among marital groups, either in terms of their satisfaction with housing or their intentions to remain.

In general, the conveniences available in the homes of the respondents were adequate by modern standards. The widowed, particularly widowers, were less apt to have all of the conveniences considered.

Most respondents were well supplied with modern appliances. The widowed on the whole had fewer appliances in their homes. Widowers were especially lacking in major home appliances; 48% had fewer than 5 of the 10 appliances considered.

Only half of the respondents drove their own cars or rode with a spouse. Over two-fifths usually rode with someone else. Less than a fourth were dependent on public transportation. However, less than 6% of the widows drove their own cars, compared to 56% of the married and 48% of the widowers. The majority of the widowed, particularly widows, were highly dependent upon other people and public systems for transportation.

A greater proportion of the small town residents fell into the poor category of level of living and residential status. The highest level of living was among married city residents. Moreover, for each residential area analyzed, married persons consistently had the highest level of living. The widowed, especially in small towns, showed the lowest level.

Level of living declined with age, though married respondents had the highest level of living, irrespective of age. The respondents with the poorest level of living were the widowed of advanced ages.

Respondents with the least education were most likely to be classified as poor on the level of living index. Nevertheless the married showed the highest level of living, irrespective of education. At the lower educational levels, widowers had a slightly higher level of living than widows, but among the more educated this situation was reversed.

The proportion of widowed persons with a poor level of living substantially increased with length of widowhood. For those widowed under 10 years, the female was most often rated poor on the index; thereafter, it was the male.

Use of Time

Nearly all of the respondents had at least 10 hours a week to spend as they pleased. A fourth had 70 or more hours. Widowed people, especially widowers, reported considerably more free hours than the married.

Generally speaking, widows were the most active group of all respondents and widowers the least active.

Most were reasonably satisfied with the opportunities to use their leisure time. Among the few who stated some degree of dissatisfaction, married persons were most likely to feel this way, and widows the least likely. Over 70% of the subjects reported no activities that they would like to participate in that they were not doing now. The primary reason for nonparticipation offered by all marital groups, but widowers in particular, was poor health.

While only 8% stated they didn't know what to do with their free time, over half reported that they just managed to keep busy. Widowers had the most difficulty in coping with leisure time; over one-fifth were at a loss as to what to do with their spare time. Married persons were more apt to say there wasn't enough time for all the things they wanted to do.

Social Isolation

Widowed persons were much more likely to be classified as isolated than the married. Widowers by far were the most socially isolated group.

Nearly three-fourths of all respondents were either living alone or with their spouse only. Over 60% of the widowed were sole occupants of the household. However, the widowed, especially widows, were more likely than other groups to be living with their children.

Over 70% had contact with their children at least weekly. Widows interacted with kin the most; over three-fourths saw their children at least weekly.

Contact with relatives other than children took place with considerably less frequency. Only 16% saw other rela-

tives weekly or more often, and 38% said they saw other relatives seldom or never. Widowers were least likely to interact with relatives other than their children.

The majority were satisfied with their opportunities to be with their families and relatives. Widowers were most likely to be dissatisfied with current rates of contact.

A reciprocal network of kin assistance was noticeable between the respondents and their offspring. Over four-fifths received some form of help from their children. Companionship was most frequently mentioned, followed by assistance in the form of gifts and transportation.

Examination by marital status of help received revealed that in every instance, widows most often reported such assistance. Widowers were most likely to say that they received no help at all from their children.

All but 5% of the subjects with children said they gave some form of help to their children. Almost 60% said they helped in every way possible, and almost half had provided aid in the form of gifts. Married persons reported giving aid of every type to their children more often than the widowed. Widowers were least likely to be helping their children.

Nearly all of the subjects felt that their family or relatives never or seldom interfered with their affairs. Moreover, most felt that there was nothing further their family or relatives could do to contribute to their happiness.

The proportion of respondents classified as socially isolated increased with age. The widowed and, in particular, the widower, were substantially more isolated than the married, irrespective of age.

Contrary to the findings of early sociological investigations of the urban community, city dwellers were the least isolated and the small town residents the most isolated. Widowers emerged as the most socially isolated group, irrespective of residential area. Widowers in small towns and open country areas were especially isolated.

Respondents with the least education were the most isolated. Nevertheless, the position of the widower as the most isolated marital type remains unchanged within each educational level examined. The next most consistently isolated group were the widows.

Over half stated they had no major problems. Among the remainder, the most frequently mentioned problems were health, finances, lonesomeness, and worry about the future. Widowers, more often than any other marital group, reported lonesomeness as a major problem. They were also least likely to have no problems at all.

Friendship Relations

More than half of the married and widowed groups reported they had at least 20 good friends in the immediate community. However, married persons had the most friends in the community and, among the widowed, the widowers were most likely to have no friends at all.

Two-thirds of the respondents indicated they had at least 20 good friends residing outside the immediate community. Again, the married had the most outside friends and, among the widowed, widowers had the fewest. Widowers were also most likely to have no friends at all living outside the community.

Almost two-thirds of the people interviewed said they were "very satisfied" with their opportunities to be with their close friends; another 22% were "quite satisfied." Married persons were most satisfied with their opportunities, and widowers were least satisfied.

Friendships were maintained with a variety of people representing several age levels. Widowers consistently included a smaller proportion of various age levels among their friends. For widows, church members were the primary source of friendship ties. Neighbors comprised the larger friendship group among widowers and married persons.

The widowed were more likely to prefer their own age group, and widowers more likely than widows.

Formal Social Participation

Nearly half of the subjects were not church members. The largest proportion of church members were widows; the greatest proportion of nonmembers were widowers.

Over a third stated that they never attended religious services. Widowers were least likely to attend religious services; widows were most likely to attend.

The female widowed is also most likely to say that religion is more important to them now than when they were younger. Even though religion was frequently reported as being more important than in the past, actual participation in church activities had diminished over time. Widows more than other marital types felt that they were more active now than in the past.

Only half of those with church connections felt that the church was taking enough interest in its older people. Again, a greater proportion (55%) of widows replied in the affirmative. A rather large percentage (48%) of widowers were either undecided or unwilling to pass judgment.

Less than a third felt they were as active in formal groups and organizations as they had been in the past.

Over half did not belong to any formal organization or group. Over three-fourths of the widowers lacked membership. For married nonparticipants, the major reason was that they never cared for clubs. This was also a major reply among inactive widowers. Widows cited poor health along with a general lack of interest in clubs as major explanations for nonparticipation.

Lodges claimed the largest proportion of membership, followed by church-related organizations. Widows were noticeable for their membership in church organizations. They also exhibited the most membership, proportionately, in formal organizations and groups, and widowers the least.

For many people, the organizational connections specified consisted of membership only. Widowers did not participate regularly in any organization or group except church-related organizations.

Participation was greatest in church-related organizations, followed by lodge meetings. Again, widows are especially noticeable for their attendance at church-related organizations. They also are the most frequent attenders at meetings of various other organizations, while widowers exhibit the least attendance.

INTRODUCTION

Widowhood is rapidly becoming a major phenomenon of American society. Census data indicate that there are more than 10.5 million widowed persons among our population today, the large majority of whom are women (63: 31). The widowed female has been outnumbering her male counterpart by a continually widening margin. Whereas the number of widowers has remained essentially constant from 1930 to the present, female survivors have shown a substantial rise during this period. Thus, in 1940 there were twice as many widows as widowers. During the following decade, widows increased nearly 25% while the number of widowers rose by only 3%. By 1960, the ratio of widows to widowers had increased to more than 3.5:1. Now the ratio is more than 4:1. In 1965, the U.S. had well over 8.5 million widows and their total has continued to rise. Widowhood then is emerging as an important area for sociological inquiry because of the growing population involved.[2]

The increase in widowhood has followed a somewhat similar pattern in Washington. Thus, in 1940 more than twice as many widows as widowers lived in the state, and by 1960 the ratio had increased to 3.5:1 (64).

Factors Responsible for Excess of Widows

Three major reasons or factors account for the growing excess of widows in the United States:

1. Mortality among women is lower than among men and, therefore, more women survive to advanced years.
2. On the average, wives are younger than their husbands; consequently, even without sex differences in mortality, they might be expected to outlive their husbands.
3. Among the widowed, remarriage rates are considerably lower for women than for men.

Other major factors that also affect widowhood status are war casualties, depressions, and disease pandemics (22:24-27).

Widowhood as a Community Problem

Concern over the plight of the widowed is reflected at the national level. At the recent White House Conference on the Status of Women, for example, an increase in benefits under the old-age insurance system for various types of widows was a major recommendation (30:60-62). The number of widows receiving old-age benefits is expected to rise rapidly over the next decade and the conference recommendations are aimed toward eliminating inequities directly affecting this special group. Widowhood has also long been known to entail a variety of social problems at the local level. Adult and child dependency, poverty, unemployment, illness, and the more significant facts of family disorganization and of women's insecure industrial status are related to widowhood (42:516-540).

Widowhood then must be viewed as a crisis situation involving increasing numbers of people.[3] It requires the development of alternative patterns of behavior if the individual is to maintain satisfactory relations with the family, the kin group, and the community, and if he is to sustain a minimum level of personal equilibrium. Sociologically, widowhood requires reintegration of roles suitable to a new status. The diverse ways in which this is accomplished are viewed as important areas for current empirical inquiry.

SCOPE OF RESEARCH ON WIDOWHOOD

For a variety of reasons, widowhood has not engaged the specific interests of sociological investigators to any great extent. However, there has been occasional recognition of the growing need for empirical information regarding their patterns of accommodation. For example, a widely read community study on aging concludes that "the effects and sequelae of widowhood have received little attention in empirical research. Widows are coming to represent a sizeable group in American life and there is a growing need for information regarding their patterns of adjustment" (24:55-77, 168-169, 254). Similarly, in the more recent *Handbook of Social Gerontology* one reviewer notes the lack of references to bereavement and widowhood in the various publications of that specialized and related fields and remarks: "It is striking that this inevitable and universal phase of life would be so patently neglected as an area of serious study" (69: 261-297). Such apparent disregard of this special phase of the family life-cycle appears anomalous, indeed, in light of the fact that three out of every four wives in the United States become widows.

[2] While there is no doubt that the *number* of widowed persons has substantially increased, their *proportion* decreased.

RESEARCH ORIENTATIONS TOWARD WIDOWHOOD

One apparent and somewhat paradoxical reason for the dearth of information in this area is that recent research on latter stages of the life-cycle has tended to submerge the identification of widowhood status through concentration on the problems of our aging population. That is, data on the aged often are not distinguished with respect to widowhood status; consequently, exact information concerning this special group becomes hard to get. Most of the research that has been done ignores or overlooks differences in levels of functioning as well as differences in backgrounds and experiences. Social class and cultural values are typically not differentiated nor considered. A host of important socio-economic variables are submerged under the all-inclusive category of "the aged." The fact that a substantial minority of the widowed in the United States do not fall within the usual definition of the aged population is frequently ignored. About one-fifth of the new widows created each year, for example, are under the age of forty-five (32: 1-4). Their problems are,

[3] An excellent review of representative literature concerning the concept of crisis and its current employment in the field can be found in reference 34:195-201.

in many respects, different from those widowed at a later age (67: 491-492).

Similarly, the "divorced, separated, and widowed" are frequently combined into a single statistical category. Such a practice may have certain parsimonious and analytical advantages, but it further obscures specific data on widowhood.

On the other hand, it is true that statistically, widowhood is largely a problem of the aged woman. As a result of the decrease in mortality before mid-life, widowhood has for the most part been postponed to the latter stages of the family life-cycle. Around 1900, about 1 in 25 persons was 65 years old or older, as compared to 1 in 11 in 1960, a trend which is expected to continue (11: 1-4, 7-12, 20-23). Since the gains in longevity have been more rapid for females than males, the growing proportion of elders in our population has accentuated the problems of widowhood. Thus, in 1965, more than three-fifths of the widows in the United States were 65 years of age or older, and "unless the trends in male and female mortality are sharply reversed, the excess of women over men at the upper ages will increase, and our older population will contain a larger proportion of widows" (53: 93-95, 107).

Another major explanation for the lack of research in this area centers around certain cultural taboos associated with death. Such taboos are apparently inculcated at a relatively young age and their influence is thought to persist throughout the life-cycle. As Eliot, one of the pioneers in this area, has commented: "Where death is concerned, there is, in some respects, a heavier load of taboo and resistance than in the case of sex. Yet it is hoped that the relaxation of the conventional repression of death may make it easier to face the fact, to study its social aspects, and to guide our attitudes and our techniques more satisfactorily" (12: 641-668). Krupp and Kligfeld have noted that many factors prevailing in the United States prevent a direct confrontation with the reality of death.

> Much in our American culture conspires to remove death from our minds and even our feelings. In television, the movies, and other expressions of our mores, emphasis is on the preservation of youth and the denial of aging. Death, though threatening and difficult to handle, is made remote. Social Security and the proliferation of nursing homes have facilitated the removal of many elderly and severely sick persons from the family circle. Estranged by our civilization from the basic realities of life (of which death is a part), we have lost contact with the daily struggle for life of animals in field and forest. We have less and less contact with nature, with the death of livestock, and with the slaughtering of animals for food. Death has become for us foreboding, frightening, repugnant, and mysterious (26: 222-246).

As a result of these and other factors, the investigator studying bereavement and widowhood meets strong resistance. "Taboos, prejudices and fears inhibit the inquirer and the informant, and fear of rebuff has held up extensive investigations in the field" (66: 472).

PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATION PREDOMINANT

A review of the empirical literature on this subject discloses that researchers have generally concentrated on the bereavement process, per se. Consequently, they have approached their subject matter primarily from a socio-psychological or psychoanalytic frame of reference.[4] The personal, psychic reactions to the shock of "dismemberment" have been particularly stressed. Case history analyses of individual conflict and adjustment to annihilation—with specific emphasis on the phenomena of grief, sorrow, and other components of the mental-emotional mourning process—predominate. Psychiatric diagnoses follow a similar orientation, especially in connection with investigations of the psychosomatic reactions to bereavement (39: 1-12; 40: 13-26; 41: 1-15). Recent studies of attitudes toward death also reflect a predominately psychological frame of reference (18, 20; 44-66). An expanded discussion of the research undertaken from this approach will not be presented here, as this report primarily explores the sociological aspects of widowhood.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Anthropologists, of course, have for some time been describing various facets of bereavement and ritualistic customs and behavior associated with it among different societies around the world.[5] Anthropological literature contains much about widows and widowers, scattered among the pages of voluminous monographs that generally focus on larger units of social organization.

The relevant data on widowhood generally tend to be highly descriptive and lack systematic treatment. Past anthropological analyses of widowhood have concentrated rather exclusively on its relationship to the economic and kinship systems. Particular emphasis seems to have been placed on patterns of widowhood inheritance (49).

THE SOCIOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Sociological analyses of death, bereavement, and widowhood most frequently overlap with the psychological in emphasis. Relatively few investigators have tried to develop the sociological implications of widowhood status or discover the social and environmental factors associated with the adaptive behavior of the bereaved family and/or its members. Thus, sociological monographs concerning the American widowed are conspicuously absent from the literature.[6] Aside from an early (out of print) publication by social workers (45), a few unpublished theses and dissertations (16, 17, 19), and a handful of lay guide books (28, 37, 38, 48, 71), most of the evidence concerning the social correlates of widowhood is scattered and hidden among a variety of published sources often devoted to some other query.[7] It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that "no single facet of the literature which deals with fatherless families has ever been comprehensively reviewed by anyone" (70: 198).

A review of the literature has revealed that the special problems that confront the widowed both at the time of

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[4] Excellent footnote and bibliographic references to sources reflecting these points of view may be found in references 12, 66 and 67.

[5] An early anthropological attempt to examine the topic systematically can be found in (3). Numerous references to anthropological studies of bereavement may be found in (26:222-246).

[6] The British social scientists, by way of contrast, have been very much interested in widowhood (1, 29, 70).

[7] For some related and pertinent comments on the lack of a sociological perspective on death, see (15:205-209; 23:635-643).

bereavement as well as beyond have not undergone exhaustive *sociological* research. "Contacting and interviewing widows, widowers, and single adults has proven to be especially difficult. The sociology of isolation may thus remain undeveloped, a casualty of the cost not only to society but to the researcher of reaching the isolate" (68: 919-930). Certainly a large population of elderly people, an ever growing number of whom are widowed, would call for systematic study of their lives, problems, and individual and familial modes of adaptation.

WIDOWHOOD: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Owing to the limited information available on the topic and the lack of any systematic treatment of widowhood in the sociological literature, it was decided to conduct an exploratory study of the subject, using data gathered from respondents living in the State of Washington.

Widowhood in Washington

The nationwide increase in the number of widows has had a parallel development in Washington. Thus, in 1940, more than twice as many widows as widowers lived in the state, and by 1960 this ratio had increased to 3.5:1 (64). In the latter year, almost 10% of the population were 65 years old or older. Among people 65-69 years old, only 8.4% of the males but 35.7% of the females were widowed. This sex difference in mortality remains with each age increment. Even at ages 85 years and older, less than half of the men have lost their spouse, compared to over four-fifths of the women.

Purpose of the Study

The most general objective of this exploratory study was to examine the existing social conditions under which the aged widowed in our contemporary American society are managing their lives. Involved in this general objective are the basic questions, "What are the major needs of the widowed, and how and to what extent have they been able to satisfy those needs?" A second general objective of this research was to discover some of those crucial *sociological* variables that might be associated with positive adaptation of widowhood. These objectives involved, among other things, an investigation of the critical problems confronting the aged widow and widower and a comparative sociological analysis of the factors in the ways the problems were resolved.

A more specific objective of this exploratory study was to develop a set of hypotheses that eventually could be subjected to an empirical test among a sample of widowed respondents residing in Washington.[8] Such a study would involve a group of widowed individuals (and their families) who would be representative of a wide range of age groups. In this way, sex differential problems peculiar to such age groups might be uncovered, and the comparative adjustment patterns between groups could be evaluated.

In summary, it was hoped that this research would:

1. begin to fill the gap in our knowledge of the widowed person in America.
2. help to develop a sociological perspective on death and bereavement. As noted earlier, psychological and psycho-analytical aspects of the subject have perhaps been unduly emphasized.
3. by focusing on certain crucial variables uncover those factors predictive of favorable adjustment to widowhood.
4. highlight those problem areas among the widowed that might be called to the attention of policy-makers and other individuals and responsible agencies who have some interest and influence in assisting the bereaved family.

Research Design

The research reported here is based upon a secondary statistical analysis of interview data from a study completed in 1956.[9] The original sample consisted of 549 randomly selected persons 65 years of age or older who were residing in Thurston County, Washington, at the time of the investigation. These data were selected as suitable for the present analysis for the following reasons:

1. Inasmuch as this was primarily a pilot study of widowhood, the ready availability of the data would require a minimum of expenditure of time and money.
2. The information was already gathered, coded, and keypunched onto IBM cards, suitable for computer analysis.
3. We have already seen that widowhood is largely a problem of the aged woman. Since nearly 54% of the sample were women 65 or older, it was viewed as adequate for our purposes.
4. In examining the marital status of the original respondents, it was found that over two-fifths of the sample were widowed persons. This would allow attempts at meaningful comparisons between widows and widowers as well as between the widowed and the non-widowed.

In the initial sample, half were married and living with their husbands or wives at the time of the interview; 41%

[8] For some of the hypotheses developed and the evidence drawn from empirical literature to support them, see (6).

[9] A detailed description of the sample design, characteristics of the respondents, and findings of the study may be found in reference 55. The descriptive aspects of the present study in many instances parallel the format of the control study and in that sense complement it.

[10] In the case of husbands and wives both over 65, only one of each couple was interviewed. Each interviewer alternated, interviewing first a husband, next a wife, then a husband, etc. ((55:51-52). In the present report, the term "still married" refers to those respondents who were married and still living with their spouses at the time of the interview.

were widowed; 3% were divorced; 5% had never been married; and about 2% were separated.[10] For purposes of the present analysis, the original universe of 549 subjects was further delimited and/or restricted to three major groups—the married, widowers, and widows. Persons divorced, separated, or never-married (53 subjects) were arbitrarily omitted from all tabulations to simplify the analysis. Also, it was felt that a comparison of the respondents in each of these categories with each other and with the selected major marital groups would neither prove possible nor fruitful because of the few cases.

Thus, for the present study the sample consists of 496 individuals including 271 married persons (175 males and 96 females), 181 widows, and 44 widowers. Inasmuch as we have previously commented on the major reasons for the greater number of widows in the United States (greater longevity of the female, earlier age at marriage of wives, and low remarriage rate of widows) this sex differential among the widowed group of interviewees was not unexpected.

Among the married respondents, 83% had been married 20 years or longer, including 13% who had lived to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. Among the widowed respondents, a slightly higher proportion of the men had been bereft of their spouse for 20 years or more when interviewed (table 1). On the other hand, the proportion of the widowed less than 5 years was slightly higher for the females. The median duration of widowhood was 10.8 years for females and 11.8 for males.

Table 1. Duration of widowhood

Duration of widowhood	Widowers		Widows		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than a year	4	9.1	13	7.2	17	7.6
1-4 years	5	11.4	37	20.4	42	18.7
5-9 years	9	20.5	34	18.8	43	19.1
10-14 years	11	25.0	35	19.3	46	20.4
15-19 years	6	13.6	26	14.4	32	14.2
20-24 years	3	6.8	15	8.3	18	8.0
25 years or more	6	13.6	21	11.6	27	12.0
Total	44	100.0	181	100.0	225	100.0

The original Thurston County survey produced considerable factual data on this sample of aged respondents. To summarize some of this information for use in the present analysis, a series of indexes were developed by combining responses to sets of items which dealt with the same general topic. For example, several questions regarding the respondent's condition of health were used to derive a Health Status Index Rating. Persons married and widowed could then be compared in terms of their index rating scores. The specific indexes developed and used are introduced and discussed in detail at appropriate points further on.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Although the general characteristics of the *total* sample were described in the initial study, they were not presented according to the major marital statuses with which this report is concerned and, hence, for the smaller sample resulting from our restriction to those categories of respondents. Consequently, this section briefly reviews the general characteristics of married and widowed subjects, including their age, residence, nationality background, educational level, and employment status. This brief descriptive profile of the sample should help the reader interpret the more complex analysis that follows. Selected characteristics of the married, widowers, and widows studied are in table 2.

Age

Almost two-fifths of all respondents were under 70 years of age; two-thirds were under 75. About 4% of the sample were 85 years old or older. As might be expected, married persons as a group were generally younger than the widowed; nearly half of the married had not yet reached their seventieth birthday, compared to one-fifth of the widowers and one-fourth of the widows. It is somewhat surprising to note that the greatest proportion of respondents 80 years of age or older were widowers.

Place of Residence

The Thurston County sample was drawn from three separate residential groups: city, small town, and open country.[11] The city sample consisted of respondents living in the contiguous areas of Olympia and Tumwater. They are the only two communities in Thurston County classified as urban by the census. No open country lies between them, and so they were easily treated as a single population. The four incorporated towns of Yelm, Bucoda, Tenino and Rainier comprised the small town sample. The open country sample consisted of residents from unincorporated areas, including those residing in the rural-urban fringe bordering the Olympia-Tumwater area. The present sample of 496 respondents were 28.2% urban, 24.1% small town, and 47.7% open country.

Among the respondents, widows tend to live in the city or in small towns; married persons and widowers most often reside in the open country.[12] Thus, over one-third of the widows live in the city, compared to one-fourth of the married, and one-fifth of the widowers. In contrast, over half the married and widowers reside in the open country compared to less than two-fifths of the widows.

Length of Residence

Data on length of residence in the current community indicated a relatively high degree of residential stability for

[11] The "open country" category consists of two types of unincorporated areas; the rural area, and the rural-urban fringe area bordering the Olympia-Tumwater locale. For a detailed discussion of the sampling procedure, see (55:51-54).

[12] It has been estimated that over 70% of the widows in the United States reside in urban areas. The national data strongly suggest that many rural women who do not remarry soon move to the city, whereas the widower tends to remain in the rural locale. See for example (31:5).

Table 2. Selected characteristics of Thurston County sample of aged persons in 1956 by marital status[a]

Sample characteristics	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total
Age							
65-69	129	47.6	9	20.5	45	24.9	183
70-74	83	30.6	9	20.5	56	30.9	148
75-79	44	16.2	9	20.5	40	22.1	93
80-84	11	4.1	11	25.0	31	17.1	53
85-89	4	1.5	5	11.4	9	5.0	18
90-94	0	0.0	1	2.3	0	0.0	1
Current residence							
Olympia-Tumwater	68	25.1	9	20.5	62	34.2	140
Tenino	19	7.0	1	2.3	22	12.2	42
Bucoda	16	5.9	4	9.1	9	5.0	29
Yelm	14	5.2	2	4.5	17	9.4	33
Rainier	9	3.3	2	4.5	5	2.8	16
Open country	95	35.1	17	38.6	33	18.2	145
Rural-urban fringe	50	18.5	9	20.5	33	18.2	92
Length of residence							
Less than 1 year	12	4.4	2	4.5	7	3.9	21
1-4 years	35	12.9	4	9.1	18	9.9	57
5-9 years	40	14.8	5	11.4	17	9.4	62
10-14 years	36	13.3	8	18.2	26	14.4	70
15-19 years	14	5.2	5	11.4	7	3.9	26
20-24 years	19	7.0	2	4.5	13	7.2	34
25-29 years	23	8.5	3	6.8	11	6.1	37
30-34 years	37	13.7	6	13.6	23	12.7	66
35-39 years	21	7.7	3	6.8	16	8.8	40
40 years and over	34	12.5	6	13.6	43	23.8	83
Previous residence							
Present community	2	.8	0	0.0	1	.6	3
Thurston County	46	18.3	7	17.1	31	18.6	84
Washington	121	48.2	20	48.8	69	41.3	210
Other Western state	33	13.1	4	9.8	28	16.8	65
North Central state	31	12.4	8	19.5	30	18.0	69
The South	5	2.0	0	0.0	3	1.8	8
The Northeast	3	1.2	1	2.4	1	.6	5
Territories	3	1.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	3
Foreign	7	2.8	1	2.4	4	2.4	12
Education							
None	6	2.2	0	0.0	2	1.1	8
1-4 years	23	8.5	9	20.5	19	10.5	51
5-7 years	44	16.2	12	27.3	21	11.6	77
8 years	87	32.1	15	34.1	67	37.0	169
9-11 years	35	12.9	3	6.8	31	17.1	69
12 years	28	10.3	2	4.5	20	11.0	50
Some college	22	8.1	1	2.3	11	6.1	34
4 years college	3	1.1	0	0.0	3	1.7	6
Post-graduate work	8	3.0	0	0.0	1	.6	9
Other	15	5.5	2	4.5	6	3.3	23
Occupation							
Professional	2	.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Farmers	15	5.5	2	4.5	3	1.6	20
Managers, officials, proprietors	17	6.2	0	0.0	4	2.2	21
Clerical, kindred	1	.3	1	2.2	2	1.1	4
Sales	2	.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Craftsmen, foreman, kindred	11	4.0	2	4.5	0	0.0	13
Operators, kindred	4	1.4	1	2.2	2	1.1	7
Private household	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	3.8	7
Service	10	3.6	3	6.8	3	1.6	16
Laborer	6	2.2	1	2.2	1	.5	8
Not applicable	203	74.9	34	77.2	159	87.8	396
Retired from life's work?							
No, still working	36	13.3	5	11.4	11	6.1	52
Partially, still working some	20	7.4	5	11.4	5	2.8	30
No, always been a housewife	73	26.9	0	0.0	106	58.6	179
Yes, had worked; housewife now	6	2.2	0	0.0	11	6.1	17
Yes, retired	127	46.9	33	75.0	48	26.6	208
Yes, but reemployed	9	3.3	1	2.3	0	0.0	10
Nationality							
Native-born	224	83.0	32	72.7	152	84.4	408
Naturalized	41	15.2	10	22.7	23	12.8	74
Alien	5	1.9	2	4.5	5	2.8	12

[a] All percentages based on column totals.

this sample; only 15.7% had lived in their present location less than 5 years. A greater proportion of the widowed persons were long-time residents. This was particularly true of the widowers, two-thirds of whom had resided in the present community for 15 years or more, compared to 63% of the widows and 54.1% of the married group.

A more general indicator of residential stability is provided by data regarding previous residence. Sixty-four percent of the respondents had moved to their present location either from another point in Thurston County or from some other county within the state. Among the three major marital groups, a greater proportion of the widows had migrated from outside of Washington. Married persons were least likely to have come from distant locations.

Education

In comparison with people of this age group in the United States as a whole, the respondents were relatively well educated and were about on par with other Washington oldsters.[13] Three percent had graduated from college and an additional 6.9% had some college experience. Approximately one-tenth had completed high school only and slightly more than a third possessed a minimum elementary school education. Less than 2% lacked any formal education whatsoever.

Persons who were married at the time of the study

[13] For the comparative data, see table 2, "Years of education completed by persons 65 and over in U.S., Washington, and Thurston County" in (55:4).

reported a slightly higher education level than the widowed. Of the married, 14.2% either graduated from college or had at least some college experience, compared to 6.8% of the widowers and 11.7% of the widows. The females in this sample generally had more education than the males.[14]

Occupation

As might be expected of such an aged population, most of the respondents were no longer employed at their principal life's occupation. Only one-fourth could actually be classified as either partially or full employed. Women in general, and widows in particular, were least likely to have been previously or currently engaged in the labor market. Thus, nearly 90% of the widows and 77% of the widowers were not working at the time of the study. Moreover, three-fourths of the widowers had retired from their *main* life's work, compared to less than half of the married group.

Among those persons who were currently employed, the three major marital categories did not differ significantly in type of occupation ($P=<.05$). Keeping in mind the few subjects involved, it may be said that the married were more likely to hold professional and/or managerial jobs. A greater proportion of the widowed were active in service-type occupations.

Nativity

All but two respondents were white. Over four-fifths were native-born Americans; about 13% were naturalized citizens and slightly less than 3% were classified as aliens. Less than three-fourths of the widowers were native-born and, compared to the married and widows, a higher percentage of them were either naturalized citizens or aliens.

HEALTH

Sociological research has rather consistently demonstrated the fundamental importance of personal health in understanding the attitudes and behavior of the aged. In this connection, separate investigations (9, 24, 35, 43, 52), to name but a few, have all revealed a positive correlation between differential indices of good health and personal adjustment, however the latter is defined and measured.[15]

Marital Status, Health, and Adjustment

The above studies and others also provide evidence that health and personal adjustment factors vary much according to one's marital status. It is known, for example, that the widowed (along with the divorced) typically have higher death rates, more mental illness, and a higher suicide rate than their married counterparts. The exact reasons for such differences and causal connection between marital status and these other factors are not known (2: 155-162).

At least one study showed that when compared with the local population, significantly more single and widowed or separated people were patients in a geriatric hospital (62: 185-186). The widowed are apparently over-represented in homes for the aged and tend to remain in such establishments considerably longer (25).

It is obvious that the health of individuals should be an important consideration in any investigation of social adjustment and, in particular, the adjustment of an aged, widowed population.

Health Status Index

Although the initial Thurston County study did not involve a comprehensive investigation of the health of the respondents, a number of questions dealt with health. The present analysis combined the responses to these health questions and an index was derived from them.[16] One point was assigned to each response indicating a positive evaluation of health on the following items:

Item	*Responses scored one point on health index*
1. How would you describe the general status of your health now?	very good good or pretty good
2. How would you describe your general health during your lifetime?	very good good or pretty good
3. Do you have a major illness or disability?	no, none at all
4. Which one of these statements best describes your ability to get about?	able to go practically any place I want to
5. Are there any activities that you have had to curtail because of your health?	no

Response scores on the health index ranged from 0 to 5 points and were distributed as follows:

Health index score	*No. cases*
0	12
1	77
2	89
3	69
4	92
5	157
	496

For analysis and comparison, index scores of 0, 1, and 2 were combined and designated as the "poor" health group.

[14] In the original study sample, 25.8% of the women had completed high school, whereas only 18.4% of the men had done so (55:4).

[15] An excellent summary of factors revealed from various studies as being positively or negatively related to personal adjustment in old age is contained in (35).

[16] The procedure adopted here follows that of Morrison and Kristjanson (35:30-32).

Scores of 3 or more were combined to form a "good" health group. This dichotomy was then cross-tabulated with marital status.

Table 3 reports data indicating the relationship of marital status to the health index scores of the respondents. A significant proportion of the subjects with poor health are widowers, whereas the largest proportion of those with good health are married. The widows fall only slightly below the married in this connection.

Table 3. Health index rating by marital status

Health Index Rating	Married No.	Married %	Widowers No.	Widowers %	Widows No.	Widows %	Total
Poor	92	33.9	25	56.8	66	36.5	183
Good	179	66.1	19	43.2	115	63.5	313
Total	271	100.0	44	100.0	181	100.0	496

Chi square 2df 8.60 $P<.02$

Examination of responses to individual items of the index reveals some of the factors contributing to the observed differences. Specifically, a larger proportion of widowers reported that poor health restricted their movement both within and outside of the home. Consequently, a much greater percentage of the widowers answered "yes" to the question of whether any of their activities had been curtailed because of poor health.

Viewing the sample population as a whole, 6 out of 10 respondents considered themselves to be in good health. The majority of these people did not find their health a great detriment to their ability to get about. Over four-fifths said that health did not prevent their going any place that they wanted to. An additional 12% said they could get about the house but only occasionally went out. The seriously ill are under-represented in this sample; only two respondents were bedfast and six were confined to their chairs most of the day.

It should be cautioned that the general health indicators used here are based upon self-reports of the respondents. Such data have limitations. Indeed, the question has been legitimately raised as to whether indexes similar to the one used in the present study can provide an adequate measure of a person's health status.[17]

Medical Expenses

Because hospitalization or medical treatment seriously drains resources, the respondents were asked how they met their doctor and hospital bills. Almost 6 out of 10 said they used their own private funds; 20% relied on public assistance. Sixteen percent said they had no bills to pay. Only 24% carried medical or hospital insurance of any kind (table 4).

[17] "Initially the question may be raised as to the validity of self-evaluations of health. Do hypochondriacal or over-optimistic tendencies, or simple ignorance of physical conditions frequently leave gaps between the respondent's subjective evaluation of his health, and the relatively objective health evaluations which medical practitioners might provide? That such gaps exist and serve to limit the validity of self-evaluations of health seems likely (35:31-32). . . On the other hand, Kutner and associates, after an extensive investigation of health in older persons (conducted in part by researchers trained in medical science), concluded that 'older people cannot be said to be ignorant of their health conditions.'" (24).

Table 4. Marital status and method of paying medical expenses[a]

Method of paying medical expenses	Total	Married %	Widowers %	Widows %
No bills	16.5	14.8	27.2	16.5
Private funds	55.6	63.1	43.1	47.5
Medical insurance	12.7	18.1	6.8	6.0
Hospital insurance	11.2	15.1	6.8	6.6
State medical aid or assistance	21.5	12.5	25.0	34.3
Veterans Administration	3.8	5.5	4.5	0.0
Family helps pay it	2.0	0.4	2.2	4.4
Other	2.0	2.6	0.0	1.7

[a] Percentages are based on the column totals and do not add to 100 because respondents could check more than one alternative.

When the data are examined according to marital status, however, some rather interesting differences are observed. Widowers were least likely to have any medical bills. (This is rather surprising in view of our previous finding that they tended to be in poorer health than other marital groups.) We can only speculate why this is the case. Perhaps widowers are more reluctant to visit physicians or use available medical facilities. Married couples were more likely to draw from private funds to meet their medical expenses. At the same time, a greater proportion of them had medical or hospital insurance; 33.2% were so insured, compared to 12.9% of the widowed. A larger proportion of the latter group, and in particular widows, required public assistance funds to meet their medical bills. Nearly three times as many widows and twice as many widowers as married couples used public assistance funds for this purpose.

Marital Status, Health and Residence

The health status of the respondents also differed according to the type of residential area. The largest proportion of the subjects whose health was rated as poor resided in rural areas. City residents were more likely to be rated in good health.

The relationship previously observed between marital status and health varied according to the respondent's place of residence. See table 5, in which the cross-tabulation between marital status and the health index rating appears separately for each residential area.

Our initial finding that married couples most often have good health needs to be qualified in light of the data in table 5, for it is clear that this holds true for urban married residents only. A similar qualification is necessary regarding the widowed. We previously noted that among all marital groups, widowers were most likely to be in poor health. The cross-analysis by residence, however, restricts this generalization to rural widowers only. Over half of the rural widowers were in poor health, compared to slightly over a third of the married couples and widows residing in the rural-urban fringe or open country areas. In contrast, a slightly greater proportion of urban widows are rated in poor health than their counterparts in other residential areas.

Table 5. Health index rating and marital status by residence

Health index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total
City							
Poor	18	26.5	3	33.3	24	38.7	45
Good	50	73.5	6	66.7	38	61.3	94
Total	68	100.0	9	100.0	62	100.0	139
Small town							
Poor	21	36.2	3	33.3	19	35.8	43
Good	37	63.8	6	66.7	34	64.2	77
Total	58	100.0	9	100.0	53	100.0	120
Fringe—open country							
Poor	53	36.5	14	53.8	23	34.8	90
Good	92	63.5	12	46.2	43	65.2	147
Total	145	100.0	26	100.0	66	100.0	237

Marital Status, Health and Age

The condition of a person's health also depends upon his age, of course. Generally speaking, the proportion of respondents rated poor on the health index increased with age. For example, among the age group 65-74 years old, 31% were rated in poor health, compared to 45% 75 years of age and older. To take this factor into account, the relationship between marital status and health status was examined while holding the age of the respondent approximately constant.

As shown in table 6, the differences in health status among the married and the widowed in the lower age brackets (65-74) are small and insignificant. Among the oldest, however, the widower's poorer health continues to manifest itself. Thus, among respondents aged 75-94, nearly 60% of the widowers are in poor health, compared to about 43% of the married persons and widows.

Table 6. Marital status and health index rating, by age

Health index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total No.
65-74 years old							
Poor	67	31.6	5	27.8	31	30.7	103
Good	145	68.4	13	72.2	70	69.3	228
Total	212	100.0	18	100.0	101	100.0	331
75-94 years old							
Poor	25	42.4	15	57.7	35	43.8	75
Good	34	57.6	11	42.3	45	56.2	90
Total	59	100.0	26	100.0	80	100.0	165

Duration of Widowhood and Health

When the health rankings of the widowed are considered in relation to duration of widowhood, the poor health status of the males continues to prevail. For example, among those widowed under 5 years, 44% of the widowers compared to 39% of the widows were given a poor health status rating. Similarly, among those widowed 10 years or more, half of the widowers received a poor rating, compared to one-third of the widows.

Psychosomatic Symptoms

As another measure of the health of the respondents, the interview included a series of questions regarding specific symptomologies or illnesses. Taken together, the responses to these items constituted a Psychosomatic Index (57).

Table 7 shows that over two-fifths of these aged respondents were bothered by nervousness and upset stomachs and had trouble getting or staying asleep. Approximately one-third were troubled with headaches and experienced occasional spells of dizziness. Over a fifth reported a fast heartbeat and shortness of breath whenever they were working or exercising hard.

Table 7. Percentage of respondents reporting symptoms a "few" or "often" times, by marital status

Psychosomatic symptoms	Total %	Married %	Widower %	Widow %
Bothered by Nervousness	47.8	45.7	45.5	51.4
Trouble Getting—Staying Asleep	45.3	42.8	40.9	50.0
Bothered by Upset Stomach	41.3	36.9	38.5	48.3
Spells of Dizziness	36.4	31.0	43.1	42.7
Troubled with Headaches	31.9	28.5	29.5	37.6
Heart Beating Fast	28.1	22.8	18.6	38.2
Shortness of Breath	22.5	20.2	18.1	27.1
Nightmares	16.3	16.1	18.2	16.3
Trembling Hands	11.7	9.5	13.6	14.7
Cold Sweats	10.2	9.1	11.4	10.1
Hands Feel Damp—Sweaty	8.8	10.9	9.0	5.6
Fainting Spells	5.3	4.5	2.3	7.4
Total number respondents	496	271	44	181

While the pattern above generally prevailed among the different marital statuses, it is also clear that a significantly larger proportion of the widowed than the married were experiencing the various symptomologies. Widows particularly were the most likely to manifest somatic symptoms. On eight of the twelve items listed, a relatively higher and substantial proportion of widows than other marital groups were represented.

Duration of Widowhood and Psychosomatic Symptomology

It has been observed that "a wide variety of somatic and psychosomatic conditions have been attributed to bereavement, but as this is a common stress, and one which is likely to be blamed for any major disorder which follows it, it is necessary to take care that chance associations are not mistaken for causal relationships" (41: 1-15). Recent research by Parkes (41: 1-15) has suggested the general hypothesis that the manifestation of psychosomatic symptomology varies with duration of widowhood. More specifically, the hypothe-

sis implies that symptomology is highest in the early years of widowhood and declines thereafter.

In order to test the latter notion, each respondent was given one point for each symptom he reported and from the sum, a Psychosomatic Index was derived. Response scores on the psychosomatic index ranged from 0 to 12. Index scores of 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 were combined and designated as "low" symptomology; scores 5 and 6 were grouped into an intermediary or "medium" category, and index scores of 7 or more were compiled into a "high" symptomology categorization. These three major psychosomatic groupings were then cross-tabulated separately for widowers and widows by duration of widowhood.

The hypothesis that more symptoms occur in the early years of widowhood and decline thereafter was not supported by these data (table 8). Indeed, there tends to be a slight increase over time in the proportion of persons falling into the high symptomology category.[18] Even collapsing the medium and high groupings into a single category does not support the original hypothesis.

Table 8. Psychosomatic index rating and marital status by duration of widowhood

Psychosomatic index rating & widowhood duration	Widower No.	%	Widow No.	%	Total No.	%
Under 5 years						
Low (0-4)	7	77.8	31	62.0	38	64.4
Medium (5-6)	2	22.2	16	32.0	18	30.5
High (7-12)	0	0.0	3	6.0	3	5.1
Total	9	100.0	50	100.0	59	100.0
5-9 years						
Low	6	66.7	24	70.6	30	69.8
Medium	2	22.1	7	20.6	9	20.9
High	1	11.1	3	8.8	4	9.3
Total	9	100.0	34	100.0	43	100.0
10 years or more						
Low	18	69.2	66	68.0	84	68.3
Medium	6	23.1	26	26.8	32	26.0
High	2	7.7	5	5.2	7	5.7
Total	26	100.0	97	100.0	123	100.0

ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

Because the majority of widows are aged and because they are women, their economic circumstances are usually below average. For example, a special survey of widows 55 years or older was conducted by the Institute for Life Insurance. Almost two-thirds of the deceased husbands left total assets (including cash, savings, life insurance, property value of the home, and other assets) of less than $10,000 to their families; over two-fifths left assets of less than $5,000. Equally significant, the median income of the wives in the year preceding the survey was less than $2,000 (21).

These figures are comparable to some extent with 1962 census data on the aged, which showed the median income of the widowed to be less than $1,200 per year, in comparison to almost $3,000 for the aged married. The census data also indicate that widows have substantially lower assets than nonwidows in all age groups (13: 3-24).

It is reasonable to assume that the economic circumstances of individuals have some impact on their life's adjustment. Indeed, "the hypothesis that economic circumstances conducive to security are related to personal adjustment in old age is, generally speaking, supported by the findings of Joseph Britton, Jean and Joseph Britton, Shanas, Cavan, and Kutner, although Havighurst and Albrecht found no such relationship" (35: 36).

The present study did not involve a comprehensive investigation of the economic circumstances of the older residents in Thurston County. However, a number of questions included concerned the nature and adequacy of their sources of support. Such items can be viewed as partially reflecting the economic circumstances of the respondents *as they perceived them.*

Economic Status Index

For this analysis, the answers to questions on the nature and adequacy of sources of support were combined. An economic status index was derived from them by assigning one point to each of the following responses:

Item	*Response scored one point on economic index*
1. Is your income more adequate, less adequate, or about the same now than when you were about 40 or 50 years old?	more adequate now about the same
2. What are your major sources of support at the present time?	self-obtained sources inheritance retirement benefits
3. What is your most important source of support?	savings, investments, insurance, own labor, spouse's labor, private pensions, from renters or boarders, self-obtained
4. What was your approximate net income last year?	$2,000 or over
5. Do you feel that your present source of support gives you permanent security?	yes, unqualified

[18] Prior research has shown the incidence of high symptomology to be most prevalent immediately following the death of a spouse, spanning a period from a few weeks up to 6 months, in most cases. For a more adequate and comparable test of our hypothesis, therefore, it would have been desirable to look separately at those respondents who had been widowed less than a year. However, this was not deemed feasible, as only 4 widowers and 13 widows had been bereft of their spouse less than a year at the time of the study.

6. Which one of these statements best describes your ability to get along on your income?	have more than enough to get along (more than minimum subsistence)
7. Is there anything you used to do that you have had to stop doing in recent years because of low income?	No

Response scores on the economic status index ranged from 0 to 7 points and were distributed as follows:

Economic status score	*No. cases*
0	23
1	103
2	110
3	64
4	63
5	50
6	64
7	19
	496

For analysis, index scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3 were combined and designated as "low" economic status. Scores of 4 or more were combined as "high" economic status. This dichotomy was then cross-tabulated with marital status (table 9).

Table 9. Economic status index by marital status

Economic status index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total
Low (0-3)	134	49.4	28	63.6	138	76.2	300
High (4-7)	137	50.6	16	36.4	43	23.8	196
Total	271	100.0	44	100.0	181	100.0	496

Chi square 2df 32.76 P<.001

Marital Status and Economic Status

Six out of ten respondents in this sample had a low economic index rating. Widows especially stand out in this connection; over three-fourths perceived their economic circumstances as poor, compared to less than half of the married group. Widowers placed intermediate, less than two-thirds rated low on the economic index.

These differences in economic status are further illuminated when the responses to specific items are examined separately by marital status.

Net Family Income

Nearly 7 out of 10 persons reported a yearly family income of under $2,000; the median for the sample was $1,312.[19] As might be expected, the group having the least amount of available money are widows; 88% reported net incomes of less than $2,000, compared to 73% of the widowers and 56% of the married. At the other end of the scale, none of the widowers were receiving incomes of $5,000 or more, whereas 10% of the married and over 2% of the widows were. Finally, the median income for married persons was $1,829 (considerably more than the sample median); for widowers, $956; and for widows, $712 per year. It is not surprising that widows were more likely to cite finances as a major problem than other marital groups[20] (when asked a general question on their most important problems).

Adequacy of Income

Despite these rather low incomes, only 6% of the entire sample said they could not make ends meet. In addition, 62% felt that they had just enough to get along on. Widows constituted the largest group in both instances. There is some indication, moreover, that they have subsisted on lower incomes for a longer time than other marital types.

For example, a question was asked about the adequacy of their income. A greater proportion of widows (11.7%) than widowers (6.8%) indicated that their present income was *more* adequate than it had been when they were 40 or 50 years old. Widowers were most likely to state that their current income was less nearly sufficient than it had been in the past. This no doubt is in large part due to the fact that at a previous stage of the life cycle most of the widowers were employed full-time and were earning considerably more money than at the time of the study, when most of them were retired. Moreover, while the aged widow might have similarly benefited from a higher income in an earlier period through her husband's employment (prior to his demise), she typically had not experienced the psychological and emotional investment and reward which often accompanies actual work participation and which many of the widowers had no doubt experienced. This suggests that the let-down that occurs from retirement from the work force creates a vacuum for the aged widowers that is difficult to fill.

In spite of their poverty, only 32% of this aged sample felt that they had curtailed certain activities in recent years because of low income. Another 6% said they didn't know. This picture changes considerably, however, in terms of marital status. Two-fifths of the widows had been obliged to curtail some of their activities because of low income, in contrast to less than a third of both the married and widowers.

Widowhood and Employment

A number of the research studies cited in this report have suggested a positive relationship between employment and various measures of adjustment. By way of illustration, Kutner, *et al.*, found that playing a role in the productive economy is predictive of favorable adjustment for widows (24: 75). Specifically, their data indicated that an employed widow in later life tends to be better adjusted, i.e., have higher morale,

[19] In the original Thurston County study, the median income was reported as $1,360 (p. 14). Our figure differs slightly from this because it is based on the income of the married and the widowed only, and has excluded 53 respondents who were single, divorced, or separated.

[20] However, the proportional difference in this connection between married persons and widows is not very great, being 18.1% and 18.8%, respectively. Only 11% of the widows cited finances as a major problem. For the latter, health was by far the greatest concern.

than either a housewife who has never worked or a retired widow. The authors suggest that if employment permits the widow to manipulate her environment (entertain friends, go to shows, travel, etc.) then one could expect a high morale to be linked to employment. The acts of preparing for work, carrying out one's functions, and returning home are seen as being intimately connected to feelings of personal worth, self-esteem, and significance in life.

Data from the present study do not allow a specific test of this hypothesis. The study questionnaire did not purposely include a measure of adjustment, such as a morale scale or the like. It is worthwhile, nevertheless, to look at the employment status of the widowed, since it obviously has some bearing on their economic circumstances.

Earlier, this report pointed out that only a small proportion of the respondents in this sample were either partially or fully employed. Out of the total sample, the employed widowed constituted less than 7%. Again, in terms of the total sample, the widowed had been, on the average, unemployed much longer than the married. This was particularly true of widows, of whom about 56% had been out of work for 10 years or more. About 43% of the widowers and 36% of the married were jobless this long. In addition, nearly 30% of the widows and married females had never worked as a paid employee. This was not true for any of the widowers.

Nearly all of those respondents who were employed were satisfied with the work that they were doing. In addition, over 80% of the employed married and widows, as well as 90% of the employed widowers, stated that they planned to continue working as long as they were able to.

Only a very small percentage of the respondents in this sample felt that they needed more opportunities to work for pay or profit. This was most likely to be the case among the married (13%) and least so among the widowers (2%).

In the present study, nearly half of the sample were retired. When asked if they were as satisfied with their retirement as they had anticipated, almost 70% answered in the affirmative. Women tended more often to be satisfied than men (55:11) and widows more so than widowers. Nearly a fourth of the widowers indicated dissatisfaction with their retirement situation. We can infer from our previous comments above that this dissatisfaction is not due to a lack of opportunities to work for pay or profit.

Sources of Support

This raises the question, what are the sources of the respondent's income? Many reported multiple sources of support. Social Security was reported by the greatest number, followed in order by savings, Old Age Assistance, income from personal labor, investments, pensions, insurance, rentals, labor of spouse, etc. The children of the respondents were least likely to be a source of support; only 6.5% of the sample were obtaining financial assistance from their offspring.

The respondents were also asked to identify the *most important* income sources. Again, the greatest number of persons specified Social Security. However, Old Age Assistance took second place, and savings dropped to fifth place.

When the data on sources of support and the most important source of income are examined according to marital status, some differences were noted (figure 1). The most *frequent* source of support for the married and widowers was Social Security, and Old Age Assistance for the widows. Each marital group also listed one of these two sources as most *important*. Only for widows, however, was Old Age Assistance the most frequent and most important source of support. And only widows reported financial contributions from children as one of the five major sources. Widows were also more dependent upon personal savings than the married and the widowers.

Figure 1. Rank Order of Frequency of Five Major Sources of Support by Marital Status

Married	Widower	Widow
Social Security*	Social Security*	Old Age Assistance*
Savings	Old Age Assistance**	Social Security**
Own labor**	Savings	Savings***
Spouse's labor***	Own labor***	Children
Investments	Investments	Insurance

* most important source of support
** second most important source of support
*** third most important source of support

Security

Because the previous discussion presented a rather grim picture of the economic circumstances of this aged sample, it may be surprising that only a small proportion felt threatened by their restricted finances. The sample were asked, "Do you feel that your present source of support gives you permanent security?" Over half (57.6%) of the subjects replied in the affirmative. An additional 26.7% considered that it gave them permanent security, but qualified their answers. Only 14% indicated that their present sources of income would not furnish them with this security, and 2% were undecided.

Even more surprising, widows were most likely to give an unqualified affirmative in response to the question (62.4% did so) and were least likely to answer in the negative! Indeed, when asked, "If your present source of income will not continue to meet your financial needs, what is your plan of financial support?" more widows than other marital types insisted that their present source will continue to meet their needs.

When the economic status of the respondents was assessed in relation to their residential areas, it was clear that small-town residents were most frequently rated low (73.3%), followed by the fringe-open country (58.4%) and city (53.9%) residents.

Marital Status, Economic Status, and Residence

Thus, city dwellers were better off economically than other residential area groups. This generally remained the case when the data were examined by marital categories, with the exception of rural widowers (table 10). Over 46% of the rural widowers but only 22% of the city and small-town widowers were high on the economic index. For each residential area examined, however, married persons consistently had the highest economic rating.

Table 10. Economic status index and residential area by marital status

Economic status index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total
City							
Low	28	41.2	7	77.8	39	62.9	74
High	40	58.8	2	22.2	23	37.1	65
Total	68	100.0	9	100.0	62	100.0	139
Small Town							
Low	39	67.2	7	77.8	43	81.8	89
High	19	32.8	2	22.2	10	18.9	31
Total	58	100.0	9	100.0	53	100.0	120
Fringe-Open Country							
Low	67	46.2	14	53.8	56	84.8	137
High	78	53.8	12	46.2	10	15.2	100
Total	145	100.0	26	100.0	66	100.0	237

Marital Status, Economic Status, and Age

Preliminary analysis of the data showed a direct relationship between the economic status index ratings and chronological age. An increasingly greater proportion of respondents were low on the economic status index with each increment in age.[21] For example, 52% of the respondents aged 65-74 were rated low, compared to 77% of the people aged 75-94. In order to take into account this factor, the relationship between marital status and economic status was analyzed while holding age categories approximately constant.

As shown in table 11, the poorer economic status of widows remains evident, regardless of age. This is particularly noticeable among the 65-74 age group, where over 70% of the widows are rated low economically, compared to 44% of the married and 39% of the widowers. Differences between marital groups in the upper age bracket are not as striking and, in fact, the differences here between widows and widowers are small and negligible.

Table 11. Economic status index rating and marital status by age

Economic status index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total
65-74							
Low	93	43.9	7	38.9	72	71.3	172
High	119	56.1	11	61.1	29	28.7	159
Total	212	100.0	18	100.0	101	100.0	331
75-94							
Low	41	69.5	21	80.8	60	81.1	122
High	18	30.5	5	19.2	14	18.9	37
Total	59	100.0	26	100.0	74	100.0	159

Marital Status, Economic Status and Education

Another factor similarly found to be highly related to economic status is the amount of education one has achieved. Among all those rated as low in the economic sphere, education was as follows: no education, 75%; grammar school, 68%; high school, 57%; and college, 31%. In order to take this factor into account, the relationship between marital status and economic status was examined while holding level of education approximately constant.

As shown in table 12, widows continue to exhibit the lowest economic circumstances and the married the highest, regardless of level of education. The poorest group, economically, are those widows with a grammar school education or less. Eighty-five percent of the latter were rated low on the economic status index, compared to 61% of their more educated counterparts.

Table 12. Economic status index rating and marital status by education

Economic status index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total No.
Grammar school or less							
Low	90	56.3	24	66.7	93	85.3	207
High	70	43.7	12	33.3	16	14.7	98
Total	160	100.0	36	100.0	109	100.0	305
High school or more							
Low	40	41.7	3	50.0	40	60.6	83
High	56	58.3	3	50.0	26	39.4	85
Total	96	100.0	6	100.0	66	100.0	168

Duration of Widowhood and Economic Status

Generally speaking, except among the oldest, widows are the poorest group. Over 70% of the women widowed under 5 years were given a low economic status rating, compared to 44% of the widowers bereft of their spouse that long. Similar proportional differences are found between widows and widowers who had been bereft of their spouse for 5 to 9 years. Among persons widowed 10 years or more, the difference between the sexes tends to disappear. About 60% of both widows and widowers fell into the low economic status category.

LIVING CIRCUMSTANCES

Another method of determining the economic circumstances of individuals is to examine their living arrangements. It seems reasonable to assume that one's living circumstances, viewed *en toto,* may be a factor that conditions a person's activities, attitudes, and, in some cases, general well-being.

[21] At least two factors may account for this relationship. First, the oldest people have the lowest life-time earnings. Second, because they are older, many of them no doubt have used part or all of their savings and resources in order to subsist.

Level of Living Index

One of the authors of the original Thurston County report compiled a level of living index from the original data (56: 12-14). The index was also used in the present analysis. The index consisted of twelve selected items. Responses to these items were scored favorable (i.e., scored one point) if they indicated the following: (1) own home, (2) drive own car or spouse drives me, (3) living quarters has no major defects, (4) has piped hot water, bath or shower, flush toilet, electricity, and central heating, (5) a room per person ratio of 2 or more, (6) does not receive Old Age Assistance, (7) net family income of $2,000 or more, (8) have more than enough income to get along on, (9) have a television set, (10) telephone, (11) gas or electric range, and (12) washing machine.

Response scores for the level of living index ranged from 0 to 12 and were distributed among the sample as follows:

Level of living index scores	*Number of cases*
0	2
1	16
2	22
3	41
4	54
5	81
6	78
7	48
8	58
9	47
10	26
11	19
12	5
	496

For analysis, index scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3 were combined and designated as a "poor" level of living group. Scores of 4, 5, 6, and 7 were "fair," and scores of 8 or more were combined to form a "good" level of living group. This basic trichotomy of summed score was then cross-tabulated with marital status.

Marital Status and Level of Living

Table 13 reports data indicating the relationship of marital status to the level of living index scores of the respondents. About one-fourth of the widowed group had a level of living rating of poor, whereas only 10% of the married group were so classified. Well over four-fifths of the married were rated as good on the index, compared to only 16% of the widowers and 14% of the widows. The differences between the married and widowed groups here are rather striking.

In order to understand more fully what the differences in index ratings between marital groups actually mean, it may prove fruitful to discuss their responses to some of the individual items of the index, as well as some additional data regarding living arrangements.

Table 13. Level of living index rating by marital status

Level of living index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total
Poor (0-3)	27	10.0	11	25.0	42	23.2	80
Fair (4-7)	122	45.0	26	59.1	113	62.4	261
Good (8-12)	122	45.0	7	15.9	26	14.4	155
Total	271	100.0	44	100.0	181	100.0	496

Chi square 4df 57.18 P<.001

Housing

The majority of the people in this sample (86%) were living in single family dwellings. Nearly all the married respondents (94%) and over three-fourths of the widowed lived in such quarters. Most of the remaining widowed were apartment dwellers.

Almost two-thirds of all respondents were living in mortgage-free homes owned by themselves. An additional 8% owned their own homes but were still making payments. There were distinct differences between marital groups in this connection. Married persons were much more likely to have their homes paid for; over 77% had attained this goal, compared to 56% of the widowers and 51% of the widows. The latter were most likely to be living in a rented apartment or duplex. For example, over one-fifth of the widows were making rent payments, whereas 16% of the widowers and less than 6% of the married had this type of regular cash expenditure.

Housing Adequacy

In the majority of cases, the living quarters occupied by the respondents were big enough. More than half were in quarters that had five rooms or more, and over a third had three- and four-room dwellings. Almost all of those individuals occupying one- and two-room dwellings were widowed, and most of these resided in small hotel apartments. While married subjects were most likely to have large living quarters of five or more rooms, almost two-fifths of the widowed also had this much living space.

Clearly, the majority of these respondents were not faced with a problem of cramped quarters. This is perhaps reflected by the fact that well over four-fifths indicated they were satisfied with their present housing. Moreover, when asked if they planned to stay in their present living quarters, a similarly high proportion answered in the affirmative. There was little variation among marital groups, either in terms of their satisfaction with housing or their intentions to remain.

Living Facilities

Another indication of the level of living is the number and type of conveniences and appliances respondents have. Home conveniences include electricity, piped hot water, bath or shower, flush toilet, basement, and central heating. Home appliances include radio, refrigerator, telephone, gas or electric range, wringer type or automatic washing machine, television, home freezer, clothes dryer, and dishwasher.

In general, the conveniences available in the homes of the

respondents were adequate by modern standards. Over 90% of the total sample had piped hot water in their homes, a tub, bath or shower, electricity, and a modern toilet. On the other hand, less than two-fifths had central heating and less than a third had basements.

Table 14. Number of conveniences and appliances by marital status

Number of conveniences and appliances	Married No.	Married %	Widowers No.	Widowers %	Widows No.	Widows %	Total
Conveniences							
0-2	10	3.7	8	18.2	12	6.6	30
3-6	261	96.3	36	81.8	169	93.3	466
Total	271	100.0	44	100.0	181	100.0	496
Appliances							
0-4	64	23.6	21	47.7	64	35.4	149
5-7	184	67.9	20	45.4	105	58.0	309
8-10	23	8.5	3	6.8	12	6.6	38
Total	271	100.0	44	100.0	181	100.0	496

Table 14 shows that the widowed group was less likely than the married to have all of the conveniences mentioned. More specifically, the home conveniences of widowers were most likely to be inadequate; nearly one-fifth of them had less than three of the six conveniences listed. Among this group, the conveniences most often lacking were piped hot water, a bath or shower, and modern toilet facilities.

Most respondents were also well supplied with modern appliances. Over 90% had radios and refrigerators. In addition, almost 80% had gas or electric ranges, washing machines, and telephones, and 60% had television sets.

The availability of home appliances, however, differed considerably between the major marital groups. The widowed group on the whole had fewer appliances in their homes (table 14). As might be expected, widowers were especially lacking in home appliances; 48% of them had less than 5 of the 10 appliances listed. For example, 50% of the widowers did not have a television set, 43% were without telephones, and 36% did not have washing machines.

Transportation

The United States is without a doubt one of the most highly mobilized nations in the world, and transportation has become a daily necessity for most of its inhabitants, both young and old alike. Americans lacking access to transportation are likely to find their lives unduly circumscribed and their participation in the larger social world extremely limited.

Only half of the respondents in this sample drove their own cars or rode with husband or wife (table 15). Over two-fifths usually rode with some other person, such as a son, daughter, or neighbor. Less than one-fourth were dependent on public transportation.[22]

When the data are examined by marital status, however, this picture is altered considerably. For example, less than

[22] Public transportation facilities were very limited, especially in the open country.

Table 15. Chief means of transportation by marital status[a]

Method of transportation	Married %	Widowers %	Widows %	Total %
Drive own car	55.7	47.7	5.5	36.7
Spouse drives me	21.8	0.0	0.0	11.9
Someone else drives me	22.1	40.9	75.7	43.3
Public transportation	11.4	18.2	42.5	23.4
Other	3.0	6.8	15.6	7.3
None (not able to leave home)	1.1	0.0	3.3	1.8
No. of respondents	271	44	181	496

[a] More than one method of transportation could be listed, consequently the percentages do not total 100.

6% of the widows drove their own cars, compared to 56% of the married and 48% of the widowers. The majority of the widowed persons and, in particular, widows, were highly dependent upon other persons for transportation. Over three-fourths of the widows and two-fifths of the widowers were thus dependent, but less than one-fourth of the married were. The widowed were also much more dependent upon public transportation. This is again especially true of widows; over two-fifths reported public conveyances as their chief means of transportation.

The widowed, then, were not as free to move about as other people. They were more likely to be forced to set their daily or weekly routines according to the time schedules of public transportation vehicles. The result, at least in some instances, may be a decrease in activity accompanied by a certain amount of personal frustration. This is most likely to be the case for widowed people who reside beyond the borders of the city in areas not normally serviced by the public transportation. This type of inconvenience no doubt encourages some widowed persons to give up their present residence in order to relocate within municipal boundaries. Of course, other reasons also induce some widowed to migrate to the city, for example, to be with their children or to seek employment, to increase opportunities for remarriage, and so on.

Marital Status, Level of Living, and Residence

The level of living index ratings of the respondents were assessed in relation to their residential location. It was clear that proportionately more small town residents (27.4%) fell into the poor category than rural (17.3%) or city (10.4%) dwellers.[23] At the other extreme, 33.8% of the rural and 35.1% of the city residents had good total living circumstances compared to less than one-fourth of the small-town dwellers.

This general pattern persisted, even when the data on level of living and residential area were examined separately by marital status (table 16). Regardless of marital status, city residents most often exhibited the highest level of living, followed in order by rural and small-town dwellers. More specifically:

[23] It will be recalled that a similar pattern had emerged when the economic index ratings of the subjects were evaluated according to residential areas. See section *Marital Status, Economic Status, and Residence.*

Table 16. Level of living rating and residential area by marital status

Level of living index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total
City							
Poor	4	5.9	2	22.2	8	12.9	14
Fair	25	36.8	6	66.7	43	69.4	74
Good	39	57.4	1	11.1	11	17.7	51
Total	68	100.0	9	100.0	62	100.0	139
Small town							
Poor	8	13.8	3	33.3	18	34.0	29
Fair	33	56.9	4	44.5	31	58.5	68
Good	17	29.3	2	22.2	4	7.5	23
Total	58	100.0	9	100.0	53	100.0	120
Fringe-open country							
Poor	15	10.3	6	23.1	16	24.2	37
Fair	64	44.1	16	61.5	39	59.1	119
Good	66	45.6	4	15.4	11	16.7	81
Total	145	100.0	26	100.0	66	100.0	237

1. The highest level of living occurred most often among married persons residing in the city.
2. Moreover, for each residential area analyzed, married persons consistently registered the higher level of living.
3. For each residential area analyzed, the widowed consistently had a lower level of living than the married, especially in small towns.
4. The city widow was more likely to have a higher level of living than her male counterpart.[24]

Marital Status, Level of Living, and Age

As might be expected on the basis of the analysis thus far, the level of living index rating consistently declined with each increment in age. Among respondents aged 65-74 years, only 8% could be classified as poor according to the level of living index rating. However, among respondents aged 75-94 years old, this figure quadruples to 32%. To take the effects of the age factor into account, the relationship between marital status and the level of living was further analyzed while holding categories of age approximately constant.

Among all marital categories, married respondents exhibit the highest level of living, irrespective of age (table 17). Among the widowed respondents, a slightly greater proportion of widows were rated poor on the level of living index. The differences between widows and widowers here are small, but they are in the same direction in both the lower and upper age brackets.

At the other end of the rating scale, a larger proportion of widows than widowers aged 75-94 years old were rated good on the level of living index. In the lower age bracket, however, the situation is reversed. Proportionately more widowers than widows are rated good. Viewing the sample as a whole, the oldest widowed have the poorest level of living.

[21] One cannot make too much of the difference between widows and widowers here because only nine widowers resided in small towns, and a similarly small number were living in the city.

Table 17. Level of living index rating and marital status by age

Level of living index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total No.
65-74							
Poor	11	5.2	2	11.1	14	13.9	27
Fair	95	44.8	10	55.6	71	70.3	176
Good	106	50.0	6	33.3	16	15.8	128
Total	212	100.0	18	100.0	101	100.0	331
75-94							
Poor	16	27.1	9	34.6	28	35.0	53
Fair	27	45.8	16	61.5	42	52.5	85
Good	16	27.1	1	3.9	10	12.5	27
Total	59	100.0	26	100.0	80	100.0	165

Marital Status, Level of Living, and Education

As in the case of the economic status index, the level of living index was related to education. Respondents with the least education were most likely to be classified as poor on the level of living index. Thus, in the total sample, the proportion of respondents having a low level of living were: grammar school or less, 18%; high school, 14%; and college, 12%. In order to take this factor into account, the relationship between marital status and level of living was examined while holding categories of educational level of the respondents approximately constant. The results of this procedure are in table 18.

Table 18. Level of living index and marital status by education

Level of living index rating	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total No.
Grammar school or less							
Poor	18	11.3	10	27.8	28	25.7	56
Fair	84	52.5	21	58.3	70	64.2	175
Good	58	36.2	5	13.9	11	10.1	74
Total	160	100.0	36	100.0	109	100.0	305
High school or more							
Poor	9	9.4	1	16.7	13	19.7	23
Fair	34	35.4	4	66.6	39	59.1	77
Good	53	55.2	1	16.7	14	21.2	68
Total	96	100.0	6	100.0	66	100.0	168

As shown in table 18, the married respondents continue to exhibit the highest level of living, irrespective of education. Their advantageous position in this respect is particularly noticeable at the upper educational levels; over half of those married respondents with a high school education or more were rated good on the level of living index, compared to less than one-fifth of the widowed. While differences among the latter are small, they indicate that at the lower educational levels, widowers have a slightly higher level of living than widows. At the higher educational levels, this situation is reversed. In any event, the widowed as a group have an obviously lower level of living than married persons, regardless of education.

Duration of Widowhood and Level of Living

The proportion of widowed persons having a poor level of living substantially increased with length of widowhood. For instance, 15% of those widowed less than 5 years had a poor level of living, whereas this proportion doubled for those widowed 10 years or more.

Among respondents widowed less than 10 years, the female was most often rated poor on the index. This situation is reversed among those widowed 10 years or more; 38% of the widowers were rated poor on the level of living index, compared to 28% of the widows.

USE OF TIME

In our initial description of the characteristics of the sample, only one-fourth of all respondents were fully or partially employed at the time of the study.[25] The majority were retired. This raises the interesting question of how these aged persons spend their time.

Leisure Time

Retired persons have been referred to as the "new leisure class" (33: 371-378). How retired people can best use leisure time has been discussed in many conferences. Hobbies, special programs, and other special activities and groups for the aged have been suggested. Moreover, "what one actually does with his leisure is affected by many factors, of which available income is surely one important one; what he would do if he could is also affected by many factors, again with available income in the forefront. The relationship between what one actually does and what one wishes he could do run a wide gamut, a continuum, from those activities which one often does but would prefer not, to those which one both does and likes, to those which one rarely does but would like very much to do" (10: 1-20).

To obtain an estimate of the amount of leisure time available, the respondents were asked, "how many hours a week do you have free to spend as you please?" The responses show that the amount of time available for leisure varied from no time at all to full time. Nearly all respondents thought they had at least 10 hours a week to spend as they pleased (table 19). A fourth had 70 or more hours.

Widowed persons had more free hours than married persons. Over one-half of the aged widowed reported 50 or more hours per week of spare time, compared to two-fifths of the married. As might have been expected, however, widowers reported the most free time. Thus, the median number of hours per week of leisure time reported by widowers was 60 hours. For married persons and widows, the medians were 38.8 and 45.6 hours, respectively. As will be shown later, widowers are the least active, most isolated of all marital groups in spite of their having the most spare time.

Table 19. Amount of leisure time by marital status

Hours per week leisure time	Married No.	Married %	Widowers No.	Widowers %	Widows No.	Widows %	Total
Less than 10	9	3.3	1	2.3	9	5.0	19
10-19	13	4.8	3	6.8	7	3.9	23
20-29	61	22.5	3	6.8	21	11.6	85
30-39	28	10.3	3	6.8	16	8.8	47
40-49	49	18.1	10	22.7	24	13.3	83
50-59	36	13.3	2	4.5	30	16.6	68
60-69	26	9.6	2	4.5	13	7.2	41
70-79	20	7.4	8	18.2	26	14.4	54
80-89	8	3.0	5	11.4	14	7.7	27
90 or more	21	7.7	7	15.9	21	11.6	49
Total	271	100.0	44	100.0	181	100.0	496

[25] Most of those employed were married. Only 9 widowers and 18 widows were working at the time of the study.

Activities During Preceding Week

A number of studies have contributed evidence that supports the hypothesis that activities contribute to the adjustment of older people.[26] To ascertain the type of activities participated in, the interviewer said, "I have a list of activities. I wonder if you would tell me which of them you have done during the past week?" Table 20 shows the variety of activities reported.

Table 20. Activities during preceding week by marital status

Activity	Married %	Widower %	Widow %	Total %
Reading	87.5	88.6	88.4	87.9
Listening to radio	86.3	84.1	80.7	84.1
Working in/around house	71.6	63.6	89.5	77.4
Going shopping	63.1	52.3	65.2	62.9
Working in garden/yard	72.3	59.1	46.4	61.7
Visiting friends/relatives	58.3	52.3	68.0	61.3
Watching television	64.6	47.7	57.5	60.1
Writing letters	49.1	36.4	74.6	57.3
Entertaining friends or relatives	58.7	40.9	52.5	54.8
Going for rides	54.6	36.4	43.6	49.0
Sewing, knitting, crocheting	18.8	.....	49.7	28.4
Sitting and thinking	23.2	15.9	32.0	25.8
Playing cards or other table games	26.2	27.3	18.2	23.4
Attending meetings	21.4	4.5	29.3	22.8
Working on some hobby	15.5	2.3	16.6	14.7
Helping in church work	10.7	2.3	22.7	14.3
Sports-fishing, hunting, etc.	13.7	18.3	1.7	9.7
Doing farm work	8.5	9.1	2.8	6.5
Helping in community work	5.2	.....	7.2	5.4
Going to movies	1.5	.....	5.0	2.6
Writing (articles, poems, etc.)	3.3	2.3	1.0	2.4
Other	5.5	11.4	5.5	6.0
No. of Respondents	271	44	181	496

[26] A summary of this research may be found in Morrison and Kristjanson (35:10-13, 39-42).

Reading was the most popular activity, and listening to the radio was a close second. Over four-fifths of all respondents had done some reading or listened to the radio during the past week. Reading, radio listening, plus working in and around the house or garden were the three most frequent activities of all respondents, regardless of marital status.

Other frequent activities included shopping, visiting friends or relatives, watching television, writing letters, entertaining friends or relatives, and going for rides, in that order. Surprisingly few respondents had gone to the movies during the past week.

There are some interesting variations by marital status. A much larger proportion of widows (74.6%) reported letter writing than either married persons (49.1%) or widowers (36.4%). Similarly, about half of the widows had done some knitting, sewing, or crocheting during the previous week, compared to less than one-fifth of the married.

An examination of all the activities in table 20 to determine the largest proportion by marital status in each activity provides a rough measure of the most active and least active group. Generally speaking, widows were the most active group of respondents, and widowers the least active. Widows ranked highest on 11 of the 21 activities. The married ranked highest in seven and the widowers in three. To put it another way, 68% of the widowers engaged in only one-third of the activities listed, compared to 38% and 36% of the married and widows, respectively.

Satisfaction with Leisure Time

To ascertain the degree of satisfaction with leisure time, the question was asked, "How satisfied are you with your opportunities to enjoy interests and hobbies?" The responses to this question are in table 21.

Table 21. Satisfaction with opportunities to enjoy interests and hobbies by marital status

Satisfaction with opportunities to enjoy interests and hobbies	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total No.
Very Satisfied	185	68.3	24	66.7	107	60.1	316
Quite Satisfied	47	17.3	9	15.7	57	32.0	113
Undecided	14	5.2	7	9.8	5	2.8	26
Not Very Satisfied	23	8.5	4	7.8	7	3.9	34
Not At All Satisfied	2	.7	0	0.0	2	1.1	4
Totals	217	100.0	44	100.0	178	99.9	493

It is obvious from the above distributions that most of the respondents were reasonably satisfied with their opportunities to use their leisure time. Among the relatively few who stated some degree of dissatisfaction, married people were most likely and widows the least likely to feel this way.

This general satisfaction with leisure time is further supported by the respondent's answers to a related question: "Are there any recreational activities you would like to participate in that you are not doing now?" Over 70% replied that there were none (table 22). Among the remainder, poor health, transportation difficulties, nobody to do the activity with, and expenses were the chief reasons given for not participating in desired activities. The primary reason for nonparticipation offered by all marital groups was poor health, but was most likely to be given by the widower. This result is not surprising; a significantly larger proportion of widowers were rated poor on the health index (table 3).

Table 22. Activities would like to participate in by marital status

Any activities they would like to participate in and why aren't they?	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total
No, none they want to that they aren't doing now	189	69.7	30	68.2	134	74.0	353
Yes, health reasons	30	11.1	6	13.6	17	9.4	53
Yes, transportation difficulties	12	4.4	1	2.3	16	8.8	29
Yes, because of expense	11	4.1	1	0.0	5	2.8	17
Yes, because of distance	3	1.1	0	0.0	1	.6	4
Yes, because of the scheduled time of the activity	3	1.1	0	0.0	1	.6	4
Yes, no one to do it with	7	2.6	1	2.3	12	6.6	20
Yes, other	28	10.3	3	6.8	13	7.2	44
Totals	283		42		199		524

In addition to health problems, widows were not as active as they preferred because of transportation difficulties and because they had no one to engage in the activity with. This is consistent with our previous finding that widows are more dependent for transportation than other marital types (table 15).

Adequacy of Time

As a further attempt to summarize the way respondents regard their leisure time, they were asked, "Which one of these three statements best describes your situation?" The responses are presented in table 23.

Only 8% of the sample said they didn't know what to do with their free time. However, over 50% reported that they just managed to keep busy. Less than two-fifths had more things to do than the time to do them.

Table 23. Description of time situation by marital status

Best description of time situation	Married No.	%	Widowers No.	%	Widows No.	%	Total
I don't know what to do with my free time	17	6.3	9	20.9	15	8.3	41
I just manage to keep busy	129	47.8	28	65.1	109	60.6	266
I have more things to do than time to do them	124	45.9	6	14.0	56	31.1	186
Totals	270	100.0	43	100.0	180	100.0	493

It is clear that widowers have the most difficulty coping with leisure time. Whereas 21% of the widowers were at a loss as to what to do with their spare time, less than 10% of the other marital groups had this problem. Married persons appear to be the most active of all respondents; 40% lacked enough time to do everything they wanted to do. Less than a third of the widows and less than one-fifth of the widowers felt this to be the case.

One consequence of the poorer health of the widower and his relative inactivity is a certain amount of isolation and loneliness. As will be shown in the following section, the widowers in this sample perceive loneliness as a problem second only to health.

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

The rapid and accelerated period of social change which has characterized American society since the late nineteenth century to the present has been accompanied by significant modifications in family organization and structure, with rather important implications for aged family members (8: 170-174). Unfortunately, research concerning the consequences of this change resulted in contradictory interpretations. For example: "It has been suggested that among the consequences of these modifications in family social organization and structure have been the isolation of older persons from their children and the development of feelings of neglect and loneliness. Other authors, however, have suggested that, as a result of such changes, the older person is now drawn closer to his children by bonds of affection" (8: 170).

Research concerning the relationship between the social isolation of the aged and their personal adjustment has similarly resulted in contradictory interpretations. Morrison and Kristjanson reviewed literature in this area. The research of some investigators supported the contention that decreasing contacts with friends resulted in poorer adjustment. Others found no relationship between the frequency of interaction with friends, children, and relatives and adjustment (35: 42-44).

Perhaps one reason for the discrepancy in research findings and interpretations in this area is the tendency, commented on earlier in this report, for investigators to treat "the aged" as a homogeneous categorization (see *Scope of Research on Widowhood* section). That the social adjustment of aged persons depends on variables other than simple chronology has been aptly demonstrated by Blau (4: 429-439). Also of importance here is the useful conceptual distinction between *isolates* and *desolates* in old age, proposed by Townsend. "Those who are secluded from family and society, as objectively assessed on the basis of defined criteria, are isolates. Those who have been recently deprived by death, illness, or migration of the company of someone they love—such as a husband or wife or child—are desolates" (62: 182). Townsend contends that the "underlying reason for loneliness in old age is desolation rather than isolation."

In this section of the report, therefore, we shall attempt to provide some clarification of the problem. We shall examine the social isolation of the aged in terms of their marital status and certain other variables thought to affect the frequency and quality of their social relationships.

Social Isolation Index

In an attempt to gauge the extent to which the aged respondents in this sample could be considered isolated, a series of questions from the questionnaire were selected. Taken as a whole, these constitute an index of social isolation. The index was derived by assigning 0 to each of the following responses and 1 point to all other alternatives not listed.

Item	*Responses scored zero on the isolation index*
1. Who else lives here besides yourself?	Living alone.
2. Do you have a job or business at the present time?	No
3. Which one of these three statements best describes your time situation?	I don't know what to do with my free time I just manage to keep busy.
4. Do you do any traveling?	No
5. Composite participation (participation in organizations)	None
6. About how many really good friends do you have here in the community.	None Less than five.
7. How often do you see any of your children?	No children living. Never or seldom. Less than 15 times a year.
8. How often do you see any other living close relatives, other than your children?	No close relatives. Never or seldom. Less than 15 times a year.
9. What would you say are the most important problems facing you today?	Neglect of other people. Lonesomeness. Feeling that you are a burden. Loss of status in the community. Loss of status in the home. Feeling of being no use to anyone.

Response scores on the social isolation index ranged from 0 to 9 points and were distributed as follows:

Social isolation index score	*No. cases*
0	0
1	3
2	23
3	55
4	114
5	102
6	98
7	70
8	25
9	6
	496

For analytic and comparative purposes, index scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3 were combined and designated as the "high" isolation group. Scores of 4, 5, and 6 were similarly combined into a "medium" isolation category. Scores of 7 or more were grouped into a "low" isolation classification. This trichotomy was then cross-tabulated with marital status.

Marital Status and Social Isolation

Table 24 relates marital status to the social isolation index scores of the respondents. Widowed persons were much more likely to be classified as isolated than married persons. Widowers, in particular, were the most socially isolated group among all respondents.[27] Two-fifths of the widowers were rated as highly isolated, compared to one-fifth of the widows and less than one-tenth of the married.

Table 24. Social isolation index rating by marital status

Social isolation index rating	Married No.	Married %	Widowers No.	Widowers %	Widows No.	Widows %	Total
High (0-3)	26	9.6	18	40.9	37	20.4	81
Medium (4-6)	170	62.7	22	50.0	122	67.4	314
Low (7-9)	75	27.7	4	9.1	22	12.2	101
Total	271	100.0	44	100.0	181	100.0	496

Chi square 4df 43.25 P<.001

The responses to individual items of the index provide some insight into the predominance of the widowers among the high isolation group.

Marital Status and Living Arrangements

In America it is not now customary for the aged to live with their children.[28] National census data show that "older people in the United States now tend to form their own households apart from the households of their adult children. This development is a result of many factors, among which are increased urbanization, increased national mobility, and, most important, cultural values which stress independent living for the older person as long as possible, and independent living for adult children as they mature and marry."

The majority of the aged in Thurston County conform to this general societal pattern of separate residence.[29] Nearly three-fourths of all respondents were either living alone (78%) or with their spouse only (45%). Only one out of six resided in the same dwelling as his children (table 25).

Table 25. Living arrangements by marital status

Living arrangements	Married %	Widowers %	Widows %	Total
Living alone	.4	61.3	60.2	137
Living with spouse only	83.0	.....	.....	224
Living with spouse and children	12.5	.....	.....	34
Living with spouse and other friends or relatives	3.0	.....	.6	9
Living with children (not spouse)	.....	13.6	26.5	54
Living with other friends or relatives (not spouse)	.4	22.8	10.5	30
Other	.7	2.3	2.2	7
Number of respondents	270	44	181	495

However, living arrangements differed considerably by marital status. Whereas only one married respondent was living alone, over 60% of the widowed were sole occupants of the household. Moreover, the widowed were more likely to be living with their children than married persons. This was most true of widows. Nearly twice as many widows as widowers lived with children at the time of the study. (The data did not allow a determination of whether the children involved here were married or single.)[30] The large majority of married respondents, over 80%, were residing with their spouse only.

Most of the respondents had children; only 12% of those who had been married were childless. Those who had children had an average of 3.8. The families of these respondents were rather large when judged by modern standards; 19% had six or more children. One-fourth of the widows reported having this many children, compared to 15% of the married persons and widowers.

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[27] In spite of the fact that we have previously noted that nearly half of the widowers drive their own cars (see *Transportation* Section).

[28] ". . . among all older people in the United States living outside of institutions, 2 of every 10 lived alone, 1 of every 10 was single or widowed and lived in a household with persons who were not his children, about 4 out of every 10 were part of a married couple living alone, and about 3 of every 10 lived in a household with their children. Less than half of all other persons who lived with their children were married; the remainder were widowed or divorced" (51:27-29). See also (53).

[29] In 1961, almost 4 of every 5 older persons lived in their own households (13.3 of 17 million or 78.4%). Nearly half of all older people lived with their spouses in their own households and another 29% lived in their own households but with no spouse present. The almost 22% not living in their own households were made up of about 16.8% of all older persons living in a relative's household and some 4.8% almost equally divided between those who were lodgers with nonrelatives and those who were in institutions.

[30] There is, however, some indirect evidence to support the conclusion that widows are more likely to be residing with married children than widowers. All of the children residing with widowers were under age 20, whereas 18% of the children residing with widows were over age 20. It is not unreasonable to assume that some portion of the over-20-years-old group were married.

Similarly, most of the respondents had children who were still living; only 15% no longer had living offspring. More of the widowers had lost their children (18.2%) and this was least likely to be the case among widows (12.7%).

Family Relations

It has been observed that "despite popular beliefs to the contrary, the fact that most older people in the United States live apart from their children does not mean that most older people in this country are isolated from their children. Indeed, findings from a national survey indicate that in the United States most older people with living children are in close proximity to at least one child and see him often" (51: 27). Stone and Slocum's investigation of the family relationships of the aged led them to conclude that "family ties were very important. Most respondents had children with whom they kept in close touch. Mutual aid between the respondents and their children was very common" (55: 33-38, 48).

Other research has similarly confirmed this finding that the aged are not isolated from their offspring, that "though physically separated to a certain extent, elderly parents and their children may tend to maintain close ties based upon mutual affection and some measure of dependence" (8: 173).

The question arises, therefore, how the pattern of family relations for the present sample compares to those noted above. When asked how often they get to see their children, over 70% of the respondents said they had contact with their children at least weekly. Widows exhibited the highest frequency of interaction. Over three-fourths saw their children weekly or more often. This is largely accounted for by our previous observation that widows were most likely to be living with their children than married persons or widowers. Nevertheless, it is clear from the data that extended family contacts were being maintained by a large proportion of this aged sample. Only 1% reported that they saw their children seldom or not at all.

Contact with relatives other than their own children also took place, but much less often. Only 16.1% of all respondents saw other relatives weekly or more often, and 38.4% said they saw them seldom, never, or less than once a year. A very small minority (8%) met such relatives almost every day. Widowers were least likely to interact with relatives other than their own children. Over half of them said they interacted with other relatives once a year or less. Thus, for the majority of this sample, contact with extended family members is largely confined to the nuclear families of their immediate offspring.

Most respondents (87.4%) were satisfied with their opportunities to be with their families and relatives. This is interesting in light of other research findings that the aged want to interact with their kin more often than they do (44: 333-339). Widowers were most likely to express dissatisfaction with their current rate of kin contact. Nearly one-fifth of them were dissatisfied with their opportunities to be with family members and relatives.

Help Patterns

Since mid-twentieth century, much research in a variety of disciplines supports the notion that a viable kin network structure exists and that it has numerous functions supportive of the goals of other social systems.[31] In a series of studies in Connecticut and Cleveland, for example, investigators uncovered networks of kin assistance and kin involvement: "The lifeline of the network are help and service exchanged among members of nuclear families related by blood and affinal ties. Help, service, and social interaction characterize the activities of this interdependent kin family system identified as the kin family network" (59: 320-332; 59: 62-92).

A network of kin assistance was also found between the present sample of aged respondents and their offspring. Over four-fifths reported that they received some kind of help from their children (table 26). Less than one-fifth had received no assistance whatsoever. Companionship was by far the most frequently mentioned form of help. In addition, two-thirds received assistance in the form of gifts, and one-third reported that their children helped with transportation. Other common types of assistance mentioned were help with work, advice, and a place to live. A small proportion (13%) of these respondents were receiving money from their offspring.

Table 26. Help received from children by marital status[a]

Help received from children	Married %	Widowers %	Widows %	Total
No help	20.0	25.0	6.3	67
Money	8.3	13.6	20.3	57
A place to live	5.2	13.6	23.4	55
Help with the work	30.9	22.7	32.9	133
Companionship	70.9	45.5	81.0	311
Gifts	65.7	34.1	78.5	290
Transportation	21.3	20.5	54.4	144
Advice	17.3	15.9	25.3	89
Other	3.5	4.5	8.2	23
Number of respondents	230	37	158	435

[a] Percentages based on respondents with children.

Every type of help was reported most often by widows. Widowers, on the other hand, were most likely to say that they received no help at all from their children; one-fourth indicated a complete absence of assistance. Two types of assistance, receipt of money or provision for a place to live, were more common among widowers than married persons.

Exchanges between families are, of course, a reciprocal proposition. All but 5% of subjects with children said they gave some form of help to their children (table 27). Almost 60% said they helped their children in every way possible, and almost half had provided aid in the form of gifts. In almost every instance, married people gave aid to their children more often than widows or widowers. No doubt, they could more often afford to do so. But the differences cannot be altogether accounted for by the respondent's economic situation, for some of the types of aid reported are not highly dependent on this factor.

For example, more than twice as many married persons as widows stated they were giving advice to their children. Also, the married were more likely to do babysitting for their

[31] An excellent summary of these studies is in (60:231-240).

Table 27. Help given to children by marital status[a]

Help given to children	Married %	Widowers %	Widows %	Total
No help given	3.5	13.5	6.3	23
Advice	22.6	13.5	9.5	72
Money	16.5	16.2	9.5	59
Babysitting	28.7	5.4	26.6	110
Gifts	53.5	29.7	42.4	201
Clothes	9.1	0.0	5.1	29
Food, produce	17.4	5.4	6.3	52
Help in every way possible	62.6	62.2	56.3	256
Other	16.0	24.3	24.7	85
Number of respondents	230	37	158	435

[a] Percentages based on those with children living only.

children than other marital groups. Widowers were least likely to help their children.

Among the small proportion of all respondents not helping their children, poverty and poor health were most frequent reasons.

Another indication of the respondents' satisfaction with their current familial relationships was obtained by asking, "Do you feel that your family or relatives try to interfere in your affairs?" Over 95% of those who had a family or close relatives said "never," and another 2% said "seldom." The differences between marital groups on this question were negligible; only seven of the married, two of the widowers, and four of the widows reported interference in their affairs by kin group members.

A related question asked, "Is there anything you think your family can and should do to make your life happier?" Most respondents (90%) said "no."

Again, the differences between marital groups in this connection were small and negligible, with some slight indication on the part of widowers of a desire for their children to visit them more often.

Marital Status, Social Isolation, and Age

The degree of social isolation varied by age; the proportion of respondents in the high isolation category steadily increased with each increment in age. For example, in the age group 65-74, 11.5% are highly isolated, compared to 26.1% of those 75 years of age and older. Consequently, the initially observed relationship between social isolation and marital status was further examined while holding the age factor approximately constant.

As shown in table 28, the original relationship continues to prevail; that is, the aged widowed, particularly the widowers, are substantially more socially isolated than the aged married. At the same time, however, the effects of increasing age remain visible. Thus, a large proportion of each marital group in the oldest age categories are highly isolated when compared with their younger marital counterparts.

Marital Status, Social Isolation, and Residence

The degree of social isolation appeared to be somewhat related to the area of residence. Briefly, it was found that city dwellers were the least isolated and the small town residents the most isolated. In both instances, relatively few were highly isolated—about 14% of the city people and 18% of the small town residents. To test whether the initial relationship between marital status and social isolation was still valid, the two variables were cross-classified within each type of residential area (table 29).

Table 28. Social isolation index rating and marital status by age

Social isolation index rating	Married No.	Married %	Widowers No.	Widowers %	Widows No.	Widows %	Total No.
65-74 years old							
High (0-3)	17	8.0	7	38.9	14	13.9	38
Medium (4-6)	130	61.3	9	50.0	71	70.3	210
Low (7-9)	65	30.7	2	11.1	16	15.8	83
Total	212	100.0	18	100.0	101	100.0	331
75-94 years old							
High (0-3)	9	15.3	11	42.3	23	28.8	43
Medium (4-6)	40	67.8	13	50.0	51	63.8	104
Low (7-9)	10	16.9	2	7.7	6	7.5	18
Total	59	100.0	26	100.0	80	100.0	165

Table 29. Social isolation index rating by marital status and residence

Social isolation index rating	Married No.	Married %	Widowers No.	Widowers %	Widows No.	Widows %	Total
City							
High (0-3)	5	7.4	3	33.3	12	19.4	20
Medium (4-6)	39	57.3	5	55.6	42	67.7	86
Low (7-9)	24	35.3	1	11.1	8	12.9	33
Total	68	100.0	9	100.0	62	100.0	139
Small town							
High (0-3)	5	8.6	4	44.4	12	22.7	21
Medium (4-6)	42	72.4	4	44.5	35	66.0	81
Low (7-9)	11	19.0	1	11.1	6	11.3	18
Total	58	100.0	9	100.0	53	100.0	120
Rural							
High (0-3)	16	11.0	11	42.3	13	19.7	40
Medium (4-6)	89	61.4	13	50.0	45	68.2	147
Low (7-9)	40	27.6	2	7.7	8	12.1	50
Total	145	100.0	26	100.0	66	100.0	237

Once again the widowers emerge as the most socially isolated group among all respondents, irrespective of residential area. The widowers living in small towns and rural areas are especially noticeable in this connection; over four-fifths of the rural and small town, compared to one-third of the urban widowers, were in the high isolation group. Married respondents consistently were the least socially isolated, irrespective of residence. Widows were intermediate. Roughly one-fifth of them were rated as highly isolated in each of the residential areas.

Marital Status, Social Isolation, and Education

A final factor found to be considerably related to the degree of social isolation of these aged respondents was their level of educational attainment. For instance, among respondents

with a grammar school education or less, 20% were rated high on the isolation index. Among the high school level subjects, the proportion is approximately 14%. College respondents registered the smallest proportion in the high isolation category, about 4%. Inasmuch as education seems to have some influence on the degree of isolation, marital types were further compared in this area while holding levels of education relatively constant.

Table 30 shows that the widower remains the most isolated marital type in each educational level examined. The next most consistently isolated group again are the widows. Married respondents remain the least isolated of all respondents, irrespective of education. The most isolated individual in the sample was the aged male widower with a grammar school education or less.

Most Important Problems

The aged in American society are frequently depicted as a group confronted with a variety of ever-mounting problems. However, when the aged respondents in the present study were asked to name the most important problems they faced, 55% said they had no problems at all. Among the remainder, the most frequently mentioned problems were health (25%), finances (18%), lonesomeness (10%), and worry about the future (4%).

In light of the relationship between marital status and social isolation, it is not surprising to learn that widowers more often than other marital groups reported lonesomeness as a major problem; 27% were lonesome compared to 17% of the widows and only 2% of the married. Widowers were also least likely to report that they had no problems whatsoever.

Table 30. Social isolation index rating and marital status by education

Social isolation index rating	Married No.	Married %	Widowers No.	Widowers %	Widows No.	Widows %	Total No.
Grade school or less							
High (0-3)	19	11.9	14	38.9	28	25.7	61
Medium (4-6)	105	65.6	18	50.0	71	65.1	194
Low (7-9)	36	22.5	4	11.1	10	9.2	50
Totals	160	100.0	36	100.0	109	100.0	305
High school							
High (0-3)	7	11.1	3	60.0	7	13.8	17
Medium (4-6)	37	58.7	2	40.0	35	68.7	74
Low (7-9)	19	30.2	0	0.0	9	17.5	28
Totals	63	100.0	5	100.0	51	100.0	119
College							
High (0-3)	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	13.3	2
Medium (4-6)	19	57.6	1	100.0	10	66.7	30
Low (7-9)	14	42.4	0	0.0	3	20.0	17
Totals	33	100.0	1	100.0	15	100.0	49

FRIENDSHIP RELATIONS

It has been observed that "contact with friends helps older people to revive pleasant memories and keep mutual interest alive. Some people, of course, make friends easily while other tend to make friends with difficulty. The latter are more likely than the former to find themselves isolated and lonesome when their old friends die or move away" (55:38).

The present sample were asked, "How many really good friends do you have here in the community?" More than half reported at least 20 good friends. This was the case among both the married and the widowed (table 31). As might be expected, however, married persons had the most friends in the community. Among the widowed, the widowers were most likely to have no friends at all.

A similar question was asked concerning the number of good friends not living in the community. Two-thirds of the respondents indicated they had at least 20 good friends residing outside the community. This was not the case, however, for the various marital groups. Among the married, approximately 62% had at least 20 good friends outside the community. Among the widows and widowers, the proportions were 56% and 52%, respectively. Again, the married had the most outside friends and, among the widowed, widowers had the fewest. Widowers were also most likely to have no friends at all living outside the community. For example, 23% of the widowers lacked outside friendships, compared to 9% of the widows and 5% of the married.

In response to a third question about friendship relations, almost two-thirds of the people interviewed said that they were *very* satisfied with their opportunities to be with their close friends. Another 22% were *quite* satisfied. As might be expected, married people were most satisfied with their opportunities to be with their close friends, and widowers least satisfied.

It is clear from the data that the widowers in this sample do not have as many friendship ties as other persons, nor do they enjoy the friendship relations they do have as much as other members of the sample.

The older people in Thurston County maintain friend-

Table 31. Number of friends within and outside of the community by marital status

Number of good friends	Married No.	Married %	Widowers No.	Widowers %	Widows No.	Widows %	Total
None	9	3.4	3	6.8	9	4.9	21
1-4	16	5.9	3	6.8	16	8.8	35
5-9	32	11.8	7	15.9	24	13.3	63
10-19	47	17.3	8	18.2	30	16.6	85
20+	167	61.6	23	52.3	102	56.4	292
	271	100.0	44	100.0	181	100.0	496
None	13	4.7	10	22.8	16	8.7	39
1-4	9	3.3	3	6.8	11	6.1	23
5-9	19	7.0	6	13.6	26	14.4	51
10-19	29	10.7	3	6.8	22	12.2	54
20+	201	74.2	22	50.0	106	58.6	329
	271	100.0	44	100.0	181	100.0	496

ships with people of various ages (table 32). Eighty-six percent included people in their own age group, 81% included middle-aged people, 76% included young people, and 63% included children among their friends. Fellow members of organizations were least likely to be included as close friends of respondents.

Table 32. Groups included among friends by marital status

Groups included among friends	Married %	Widowers %	Widows %	Total %
People in own age group	88.9	72.7	84.5	85.9
Middle-aged people	80.8	70.5	84.0	81.0
Young people	78.6	61.4	76.0	76.0
Children	64.9	56.8	61.3	62.9
Acquaintances from years ago	61.6	43.2	67.4	62.1
Neighbors	81.5	75.0	16.6	57.3
Members of my church	36.2	13.6	49.7	39.1
Fellow members of organization	33.9	16.0	35.4	32.9
Other	.7	.....	1.7	1.0
No one	1.1	2.3	.6	1.0
Total number respondents	271	44	181	496

It is clear from table 32 that widowers, when compared to other marital types, consistently included a smaller proportion of each friendship group listed among their friends. This is another indirect indication of their relative isolation.

There are some other rather interesting differences among marital statuses in this connection. For example, half the widows mentioned church members. Only 36% of the married and 14% of the widowers included such persons as friends.[32] On the other hand, widows were least likely to mention neighbors as close friends; only 17% did so in contrast to over four-fifths of the married and three-fourths of the widowers. Neighbors, in fact, comprised the largest friendship group among widowers. This fact may reflect their lesser mobility and activity, previously commented on.

The respondents were further asked to specify those age groups with which they *preferred* to associate. Four-fifths stated they preferred all ages. Another 7% had no particular preference. Only 10% said they preferred only their own age group, and less than 3% preferred only younger people. The widowed were more likely than the married to prefer their own age group, and widowers more likely than widows. The proportions here, however, are rather small, and it is perhaps worth repeating that the large majority of all marital statuses definitely preferred to participate with all age groups. The conclusion that "many older people do not care to be singled out as a particular age group, but wish to participate in activities and interpersonal relationships without regard for their age level" (55: 40) appears to be a valid generalization.

FORMAL SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Religious Groups and Activities

Nearly half of the aged persons in this sample were not church members. The largest proportion of church members were widows (62%), whereas the greatest proportion of nonmembers were widowers (57%). Over 90% of the church members were some type of Protestant.

Over a third of the respondents stated that they never attended religious services. Since widowers were least likely to belong to a church, it was expected that they would participate less in church activity—and this turned out to be the case. For example, over half of the widowers said they never attended religious services, compared to 34% of the married and less than a third of the widows. Among those who did attend, widowers did so less often than other marital statuses. Thus, 9% of the widowers attended church services once a week or more, in contrast to 37% of the widows and 27% of the married.

In sum, the female widowed in this sample was the most likely marital type to belong to a church and to attend its religious services frequently.

Religious activities apparently become more important to many people as they advance in years. Thus, almost two-fifths of the respondents said that religion was more important to them now than it had been when they were younger. This was particularly true of the widows (45%) and least so among the widowers (30%).[33] Of all marital groups, widowers were most likely to report that religion was (a) never important in their lives, or (b) less important to them now than earlier. Religion was viewed about the same importance as when they were younger, 54% of the sample said.

Even though religion was frequently reported to be more important than in the past, actual participation in church activities had *diminished* over time. More than half (57%) of the respondents said that they were less active in the church than they had been when they were younger. As might be expected, a larger proportion of widows than other marital types were more active now than in the past.

Respondents who had indicated a church connection were further asked, "Judging by your experience, do you think your church is taking sufficient interest in its older people?" In response, 50% felt the church was taking sufficient interest and 11% did not. A third were either undecided or unwilling to pass judgment. Again, proportionately more widows (55%) replied in the affirmative. Only 48% of the married and 43% of the widowers believed this to be the case. A rather large proportion of the widowers (48%) were either undecided or unwilling to reply.[34]

Formal Groups and Organizations

Sociological research has rather consistently demonstrated that social participation declines in old age. This generalization apparently holds for the majority of respondents in the present study. When asked whether they had been more

[32] This no doubt reflects the greater involvement in church life on the part of widows. For corrobative evidence on this point, see (46).

[33] Moreover, this was more true of women (46%) than men (29%). See (55:41).

[34] In general, women more often than men indicated the belief that their church was showing sufficient interest in older people; men were more often undecided (55:42).

active in formal groups and organizations when they were younger, more than 6 out of 10 replied in the affirmative. Only 30% felt they were currently as active as in the past. There were slight variations among marital types in this connection, with some small indication that women, particularly widows, were somewhat more likely to be more active than they had been when younger.

Over half of the respondents did not belong to any formal organization or group. Widowers were particularly noticeable here; over three-fourths lacked membership in formal organizations or groups. Respondents who said that they took no part in any organizations or groups were asked to give their reasons for not participating. Over one third replied that they had never cared for clubs. Nearly a fourth gave poor health as a reason; 16% couldn't afford it; and 14% lacked transportation to meetings.

Among the married nonparticipants, the major reason offered was that they never cared for clubs (41%). This was also the most predominant reply (along with those who felt that they couldn't afford to participate) among the widowers (29%). Widows, on the other hand, cited poor health (30%) as their major explanation for nonparticipation, along with a general lack of interest in clubs (27%). Of all marital groups, widows were more likely to cite lack of transportation as a reason, whereas widowers were most likely to cite lack of finances. For the sample as a whole, it is clear that a majority of those who were not participating in social organizations or clubs had no desire or need to.

Examination of the data with respect to (a) the particular organizations which the subjects claimed membership in, and (b) the proportion reporting regular attendance at the meetings of those organizations, revealed the following (table 33):

MEMBERSHIP

1. Lodges claim the largest proportion of membership. Over one fifth of the married and widows and 16% of the widowers were lodge members.
2. Church-related organizations, such as missionary societies and men's brotherhoods, ranked second in terms of membership. Widows were especially noticeable here; one-fourth reported this type of affiliation, compared to about 14% of the married and 7% of the widowers.
3. Less than 10% of any marital group were affiliated with any single remaining organization in table 33.
4. Overall, widows exhibit the most membership, proportionately, in formal organizations and groups, and widowers clearly the least. In fact, widowers were affiliated with only 4 of the 14 organizations listed.

ATTENDANCE

1. For many respondents, the organizational connections specified were purely nominal, consisting of membership without actual personal participation. This is rather dramatically illustrated in the case of widowers, who attended regularly only the meetings of church-related organizations they belong to. They did not participate regularly in any other organization or group.
2. Whereas lodges claimed the highest proportion of membership, followed by church-related organizations, in terms of actual participation this order is reversed. Again, widows were especially noticeable for their activity in church organizations; 20% regularly attended the church meetings compared to 9% of the married and less than 3% of the widowers.
3. Overall, widows attended meetings of various organizations most often and widowers the least. For instance, 17% of the widows attended three or more meetings per month, compared to 10% of the married. None of the widowers attended meetings this often.

Table 33. Organization and group membership and attendance by marital status

Organizations	Total		Married		Widower		Widow	
	Member	Attend	Member	Attend	Member	Attend	Member	Attend
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Lodges	21.2	7.1	22.1	6.3	15.9	.....	21.0	9.9
Church groups	17.5	12.5	14.4	9.2	6.8	2.3	24.9	19.9
Farm organizations	5.0	2.4	7.4	3.7	.....	.....	2.8	1.1
Bridge or social clubs	4.4	3.6	3.7	3.3	.....	.....	6.6	5.0
Veteran's organizations	4.2	2.0	4.4	1.5	2.3	.....	4.4	3.3
Community service groups	4.0	2.6	4.4	3.0	.....	.....	4.4	2.8
Labor unions	4.0	1.0	6.3	1.5	2.2	.....	1.1	.6
Women's clubs	3.8	3.8	1.5	1.5	.....	.....	8.3	8.3
Sewing clubs	2.0	1.0	.7	.....	.....	.....	4.4	2.8
Townsend clubs	1.2	.8	1.5	1.1	.....	.....	1.1	.6
Business or professional groups	1.0	.6	1.8	1.1	.....	.....	.....	.....
YMCA - YWCA	.6	.6	1.1	1.1	.....	.....	.....	.....
Charity & Welfare groups	.4	.4	.7	.7	.....	.....	.....	.....
Other clubs or retired people	.6	.4	.7	.4	.....	.....	.....	.....
No organization connections	52.2	52.2	49.4	49.4	77.3	77.3	50.3	50.3
Number of respondents	496	496	271	271	44	44	181	181

CONCLUSIONS

From the preceding analysis, certain major conclusions regarding the social adaptation of the aged widowed in Thurston County were drawn. First, a conclusion regarding the aged married is offered. The most obvious and perhaps most general conclusion drawn from the analysis is:

1. The aged married, by and large, occupy a distinctly advantageous position compared with other marital counterparts. They are, for example, in better health and more favorable economic circumstances than the widowed, whether such factors are measured by broad indexes or by specific indicators. A similar conclusion is generally applicable in most of the other areas examined.

The aged person in American society finds himself in a phase of the life-cycle that requires economic and sociological adaptations for a successful, acceptable pattern of daily living. For the aged married, the requirements for accomplishing this transition are eased by a variety of circumstances, including the benefits of mutual planning and sharing, reciprocal socio-emotional support, and the psychological buttress of a lengthy and continuous period of paired interaction and activity.

For the aged widow, on the other hand, the requirements for satisfactory living are confounded by the absence of a significant role partner and, in the case of females, the loss of the major breadwinner. Both the social and psychological support necessary for maintaining a balanced existence are frequently diminished and, in many instances, almost totally absent. This is reflected in the findings of the present study and in the conclusions below. A discussion and elaboration of certain of these comprises the final section of the report.

2. Widowhood status results in a reduced capacity to maintain satisfactory economic circumstances, especially in the case of females residing in rural areas.
3. Widowhood leads to a deterioration in health status, especially in the case of males residing in a rural area.[35]
4. Widowhood leads to a decline in the level of living, especially in the case of males in a small town.
5. Widowhood is accompanied by an over-abundance of free time, creating problems of loneliness and isolation, especially in the case of males.
6. Frequency of interaction with kin and friendship groups declines when the spouse dies, especially in the case of the death of the wife.
7. Widowhood is more likely to result in a decline in activity on the part of males.
8. Adaptation to widowhood is more difficult for males than females.
9. Widowhood status creates greater strains for rural residents.
10. Adaptation to widowhood is dependent upon and affected by the variables of age, education, and place of residence.
11. Duration of widowhood does not have as great an influence as the age factor.
12. Religion plays an important role in the process of adapting to widowhood, especially in the case of females.

Discussion

The use of a standard demographic characteristic such as marital status as a sensitizing variable for discerning the lives of individuals and/or groups has been rather consistently demonstrated throughout this report. The result has been the detection of a number of significant differences between the aged married and widowed. Moreover, some rather dramatic differences emerged from the comparisons between widows and widowers. For this reason, and because the initial intent of this investigation was to explore the phenomena of widowhood, the remaining discussion will focus upon certain significant and differential aspects of social adaptation among the aged widowed.

THE ISOLATED WIDOWER

There is no doubt that the most isolated subject in this sample is the widower. This was especially true among older, relatively uneducated men living in an essentially rural environment. Some of the other factors that collectively lead to this isolation are readily identifiable from the data: for example, the poor health of the widower and the resulting confinement of his movements to within the home. In addition, in comparison to other marital groups, widowers were *least* likely to live with children, to have a high degree of kin interaction or be satisfied with extended family relations, to receive from or give to children various forms of assistance, to have friends in or outside of the community or to be satisfied with their opportunities to be with close friends. Further, widowers were *least* apt to be church members or to attend church services, and to belong to and participate in other formal organizations or groups. The overall consequence of all this, one suspects, is a less than adequate amount of stimulating and rewarding social interaction.

However, less easily identifiable factors may be conditioning the isolation of the widower in American society. Such factors are cultural in nature and have to do with sex-role definitions and expectations. Some sociologists agree, for example, that the role of the female remains relatively unchanged upon the death of her spouse (61:177-211). The assumption is that a woman continues to perform her household duties pretty much as she did while her husband was alive. "In fact, for a great many widows living alone, the day to day tasks involved in keeping house constitutes a very important variety of meaningful activity; and ability to maintain certain standards of good housekeeping often represents a challenge and a test of the degree to which the older woman is avoiding 'getting old'" (61:177-211). Thus, many aged widows can maintain separate living quarters and care for themselves. It has also been noted that "the aged mother is more likely to be invited to live in the family of a son or daughter because she can be very useful in the household and pay her way in services rendered in the home" (54:267-269).

The aged widower, on the other hand, is confronted with

[35] Further support for this conclusion is provided by the fact that the mortality rate among the widowed tends to be higher than that of the married (50).

a series of practical problems as a result of the death of his wife. He finds himself faced with additional and traditionally female tasks, such as keeping house. He is likely to need someone to prepare his meals, maintain the household, and provide him with general care. At the same time, society expects males to fend for themselves and avoid becoming dependent. This is an expectation that the widower is not always quite able to live up to. But his *awareness* of that expectation may lead to a certain hesitation or reluctance to ask for or seek assistance. Indeed, this awareness may sometimes make the widower feel compelled to sustain an image of self-sufficiency in the face of a burdensome existence. It is quite possible, therefore, that for some widowers isolation and loneliness are the consequences of this reluctance to admit an inability to maintain a rewarding independent existence.

The widower's rather low degree of social participation is not due to a lack of time. On the contrary, widowers generally have more leisure hours than other marital groups. Nevertheless, they have much more difficulty in occupying themselves with various types of meaningful activity.

The lower degree of kinship interaction among widowers is partially explained by the central role assigned to females in maintaining kinship obligations. In American society, the female has assumed responsibility for integrating the kindred, either through direct contact or via other communication (5). Thus, women generally are more involved in the kinship system than men (14:206-214). Moreover, the "central role of the woman in performing duties imposed by kinship apparently also provides opportunities for her to show preference for the maternal side of the family despite the normative pattern of treating maternal and paternal relatives equally. In those activities with relatives which are not clearly obligatory, a woman is able to express her preference for her own blood relatives, and in doing so increase their contact with her children as compared with her husband's relatives' contact" (47:340-346). The consequences of this emphasis on the maternal line are eventually reflected in widowhood. Thus, in some recent research on extended family relations the present writer found that:

> . . . when the single parent living happens to be the mother, the frequency of interaction with kin is almost as high as when both parents were alive. In contrast, when the single parent living is the father, the frequency of interaction with kin is almost as low as when both parents were deceased. The role of women, in this case the parental mother, in establishing and maintaining contact with the kin group is further demonstrated by this data. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the widowed mother in American society tends to become an object of increased concern to members of the extended family. If this be the case, then the high rate of interaction referred to might alternatively be explained as resulting from members of the kin group, particularly the married siblings, initiating greater frequency of contact with the widowed female (7:107).

Interaction with kin on the part of the husband need not *necessarily* be decreased by the death of the wife. There is nothing to prevent the surviving husband from initiating and promoting extended family interaction. He may, for example, write letters and make telephone calls, as well as visit family and relatives, unless otherwise prevented from doing so by reasons of health and the like.

THE ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED WIDOW

The comparatively poorer economic situation of the widow in the sample is evident from a number of indicators previously mentioned. For example, nearly 9 out of 10 widows lived on a money income of less than $2,000 per year. As a consequence, widows were more apt:

1. to rely on public assistance and contributions from their children as sources of support
2. to be unable to make ends meet
3. to curtail some of their activities for various economic reasons.

The relatively unfavorable economic position of widows remains regardless of their age, education, or place of residence. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that among the three major marital groups studied, widows were most likely to cite finances as a major problem.

At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, widows were least likely to be threatened by their economic circumstances, feeling that their present sources of income would meet their needs. Why this should be the case is not readily apparent.[36] A number of speculations come to mind. It may be that widows require less to live on.[37] We had suggested earlier that widowers are not as self-sufficient as widows with respect to maintaining a home, that is, widows require less outside help. Recreation for widows frequently is less of an expense than it is for widowers. For example, the female may sew or knit in the home for extended periods of time; this may be both a hobby and a recreation. Landis found that the widow was more likely to care for the type of recreation that can be engaged in during old age, such as knitting and hobby crafts, whereas the male is often not vigorous enough to carry on his former outdoor hobbies (27:60-67).

THE WIDOW AND THE CHURCH

The religious institution looms large in the life of the aged widow in this sample and the church serves as a major source of social participation for her. Widows were more likely than widowers to be affiliated with a church and to attend its services, to be active in its organizations, and so on. Widows, therefore, were most likely to feel that the church was taking a sufficient interest in its older people.

Differences between widows and widowers here are in part accounted for by the fact that women traditionally have

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[36] Although it is not doubt partially due to the fact that many of the widows were receiving public assistance and felt that such assistance would be forthcoming for as long as it was needed.

[37] In this connection, Morrison and Kristjanson (35:39), have commented: "One might, for instance, venture the hypothesis that, at least above the subsistence level, the adequacy of income is in large measure dependent upon what the individual considers to be his economic needs. Two individuals with approximately the same income may vary considerably in the way they evaluate the adequacy of the income. Status considerations may make a $150 per month income perfectly adequate for a retired plumber and his wife, while the same amount may not allow a retired accountant and his spouse to have the type of home, clothing, auto, entertainment, etc., that they consider commensurate with their social position."

played a more active role in religious activities. They have, for example, generally assumed the responsibility for taking the children to church. In short, women generally have a more consistent and longer relationship with the religious institution. Thus, as a result of this more continuous association, women are more likely to remain religiously active upon the death of their spouse than men. A husband's religious participation, on the other hand, is more apt to decline or to cease altogether following the death of the wife.

At a more general level, religion no doubt is used by many of the widowed as an adjustive mechanism. "Throughout the ages religion has given man not only rituals that provide emotional relief and techniques that fortify faith and thus enable him to carry on, but also generalized intellectual interpretations that have helped him to make moral sense out of his total life experience. Religion has aided people in answering the question of why untoward things happen. Some answer to this question . . . is no doubt a necessity for human beings if they are to accept and assimilate their frustrations" (36: 4). Our data suggest, however, that among the widowed, religion apparently serves this function more adequately for females than males.

Finally, it may be that church related organizations, as forms of community service and outlets for social participation, are more appealing to women than men. Moreover, the fact that paired relationships are not a prerequisite to participation in church activities may encourage many widows to become involved. Within the church, her single status does not prevent her from becoming an intimate member of the group. Under other social circumstances or in different social settings, she could find herself barred from participation either through neglect or by noninvitation.

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